







Thomas Dowling

STRICTURES,  
CRITICAL AND SENTIMENTAL,  
O N  
THOMSON'S SEASONS;  
WITH  
HINTS AND OBSERVATIONS  
O N  
COLLATERAL SUBJECTS.

BY J. M O R E.

*O how canst thou renounce the boundless store  
Of charms which Nature to her votary yields!  
The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,  
The pomp of groves, and garniture of fields,  
All that the genial ray of morning gilds,  
And all that echoes to the song of even,  
All that the mountain's sheltering bosom shields  
And all the dread magnificence of heaven,  
O how canst thou renounce and hope to be forgiven!*

MINSTREL,

L O N D O N:  
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M DCC LXXVII.



TO  
GEORGE LEWIS SCOT, Esq.  
ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S  
COMMISSIONERS OF EXCISE.

SIR,

YOUR generous attachment to the Author of the *Seasons*, shall be my apology for prefixing your name to a work, that is intended to illustrate their beauties. To one, who had so just an esteem for his company and worth, while alive, surely his memory, cannot but be still very dear. And this renewal of an intimacy, in which the heart was then so deeply interested, must afford such a mind as your's, some very pleasing and tender sensations.

You, Sir, are the sole *Surviver* of that social and classical society of which our Author was one of the most amiable members. And could he deign a glance of approbation, from the superior sphere in which he now moves, on this humble performance, I know no patronage, to which, he would so frankly recommend it as your's. He was a man of worth, not of ceremony. And let me hope, as he would have done, that my respect for him and his works, will abundantly supply every other form of introduction.

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## ii D E D I C A T I O N.

It was the singular felicity of your friendship in the fortune of our Bard, that first suggested the idea of thus dedicating these *Strictures* on his Poem to you. And the opinion of the publick, I presume, will sufficiently authenticate my choice. For the generous ardour in which Thomson recommends every liberal and manly deed, can only be felt and relished by one, who like you, Sir, delights more in the practice than the theory of virtue.

But let me not hurt that delicacy so inseparable from taste and genius, by a panegyric as much beneath an honest man to give, as it would be unworthy you, Sir, to receive. The world at large knows already both who you are, and what you do, and the worthy have long treasured it up in their hearts. With their approbation, and that of your own mind, you have great reason to be satisfied. Trust me, the sweet recollection of having done so much good, with so little shew, will serve you as a cordial, when all your other enjoyments are tasteless and forgotten.

Simplicity of manners and candour of heart, in conjunction with a mode of thinking equally original and well improved; a fund of the best natured humour happily tempered with taste and politeness; an habitual attention to all the du-

# D E D I C A T I O N. iii

ties of humanity; and the tenderest regard for every species of modest and forlorn merit; are *qualities* not easily hid, but so inviolably connected with the chastest sensibility, as to render a particular application of them peculiarly delicate.

THOMSON'S whole poem is one of the sweetest oblations; that ever was offered by genius at the shrine of morality. And it has been my business in these *Strictures* rather to delineate his spirit than criticise his manner. I only regret, they are not more worthy the subject they illustrate and the patronage they claim.

Such in truth are the sentiments, Sir, in which with equal respect and esteem I have the honour to subscribe myself,

Your most obedient,

And very humble servant,

JOHN MORE.

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THESE



THESE *Strictures*, are not a tedious detail of common-place remark, mere verbal annotations, various readings, or imitations of different writers either in thought or expression. This, and every other sort of literary parade, the Author chearfully foregoes, for what may be called moral or sentimental criticism. He wishes, with his author, to address the heart rather than the fancy, to connect speculation with life, and to mingle instruction with amusement. This important object he pursues not without a considerable share of confidence and solicitude. His observations, however apparently excentric, are all less or more connected with the subject. The Chapter *on the Use and Abuse of Criticism* was originally delivered to a private society of friends on the question, Whether the Editors and Commentators of Homer and Shakespeare, had done these Writers any real service? and, though containing some bold expressions, is now published without any material alteration, rather as an apology for the Author's own manner, than any intentional attack on that of others.



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# ERRATA

Page	Line	
24.	21	<i>for</i> import, <i>read</i> impart
33	14	<i>for</i> should, <i>r.</i> shall
59	1	<i>for</i> II. <i>r.</i> III
61	14	<i>for</i> sensative, <i>r.</i> vegative
81	10	<i>for</i> tha, <i>r.</i> that
109	23	<i>for</i> mental, <i>r.</i> mechânical
169	23	<i>for</i> suggest, <i>r.</i> sluggish
196	12	<i>for</i> fictious, <i>r.</i> fictitious
204	11	<i>for</i> shamfull, <i>r.</i> shamefully

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## C H A P. I.

### *On the Genius of Poetry.*

*The poet's eye in a fine phrenzy rolling  
Doth glance from heav'n to earth, from earth to heav'n,  
And as imagination bodies forth  
The form of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothings  
A local habitation and a name.*

EVERY species of true Poetry is the genuine effusion, either of a glowing heart, or of an ardent fancy ! In truth, these are qualities which nature seldom bestows apart. Wherever we find uncommon sensibility, the powers of imagination are proportionably strong. Hence it is often observed, that the sympathetic few, whose minds have got a habit of thinking, whose tastes are refined by reading, whose tempers are mellowed by humanity; are by turns, of all others the most lively, and the most melancholy. This brooding and musing disposition, so congenial to the best minds, and which originates partly from delicacy of organs, and peculiarity of conception, whether connected with polished or uncultivated life, is the

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only stamina of poetical merit. How uncommonly plaintive and energetical the strains, in which the amiable Gray dilates this idea. The scene lies in a church-yard, and his *muse*, the native seat of tenderness and sublimity, lifts up her voice among the dead, and warbles in the most majestic and melancholy tones !

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid,  
 Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire !  
 Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd,  
 Or wak'd to extacy the living lyre.  
 But knowledge, to their eyes her ample page  
 Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll ;  
 Chill penury repress'd their noble rage  
 And froze the genial current of the soul.

THE history of the Stoicks is proof sufficient that equanimity fits just as awkwardly on men, as dignity does on apes. Perhaps the fable of Proteus is no bad emblematical representation of the human mind. Her dwelling, like his, is invisible, she is active only when impelled by certain circumstances, occasions, and feelings ; and he was not more intent on counting his flocks and his herds than she is, in arranging and digesting her ideas. His sleep which succeeded this exercise may refer ; either to her being worn out with study, or the limits that circumscribe her operations. Nor did he know more about time, prophet as he was, than she does

to whom the past, the present, and the future, are in some sort familiar. But most of all, the different shapes he assumed, easily and elegantly apply to her wonderful powers of improvement, and exhibit a striking picture of that beautiful and new creation which attends the excursions of every poetical genius.

THE character in which there is no variety is rarely striking, never original. Uniformity of temper and manners, in every situation, fools have dignified with the name of philosophy, but men of sense know to be dullness. And we shall most certainly lose our labour, if we seek for any kind of excellence amidst the sterile stupifaction of apathy and phlegm. There is no merit which is not the child of exertion. Genius never steps forth with conscious pre-eminence, till roused and excited by the prospect of immortality, or an emulation to excel. But the moment fancy thus takes fire, and the heart thus catches the flame of glory, she starts from her slumbers, exhibits her own likeness, and asserts her natural superiority. It is the captivating union of fiction and sentiment, which then gives poetry her divinest charms, which renders her so delightful a companion to the votaries of taste, and which gives her so much the advantage of all her sister arts.

THE mind of man is equally fond and full of variety. We dislike most, if not all things, in pro-

portion as we know them. Our experience, whatever we may know of nature, or have seen of life, does by no means exhaust the subject. The largest acquisitions of the longest lives and most ardent capacities, are still inadequate to our natural thirst for novelty. This is that universal passion which predominates less or more in all characters, moulds our tempers, selects our pleasures, and determines our pursuits, which renders our present precarious being supportable, and after which we continue to dance in every form, from the beginning to the end of life. That alarming vacuity or emptiness within ourselves, which we feel so often, and regret so much, is a most affecting indication of conscious wretchedness, and that nothing past or present is satisfying or deserves attention independent of futurity. This characteristic feature of the human intellect, alternately pleased and puzzled the greatest philosophers of antiquity. And a British bard, who always knew where to dive for the richest ore, expresses it with equal beauty and precision in these well known and well made lines.

Hope springs eternal in the human breast,  
Man never is, but always to be blest :  
The soul uneasy and confin'd from home,  
Rests and expatiates in a life to come.

To comprehend this idea in its utmost latitude, we need only transfer our attention from life to poetry. For the same principles by which misers so anxiously hoard their stores, by which the sons of pride scramble up the steep and slippery ascent of power, by which the votaries of pleasure are so meanly absorbed in luxury, and by which the idle of every kind, take so many ways of killing that time, which must otherwise kill them ; dispose the whole world to chace the folly, or conjure up the fiction most adapted to their humour. Nothing fills imagination with those noble and sublime conceptions so congenial to her nature, perhaps nothing greatly delights or ravishes the heart which has not in it a certain dash of romance.

HERE then the propitious Genius of Poetry comes to our assistance and relief, with a seasonable and singular propriety. New worlds, new orders of being, another universe peopled with variety of other inhabitants, arise at her call ; and at her call vanish and give way to an endless succession of the same præternatural characters crouding in groupes on original minds, through the whole range of aërial creation. What is popular superstition in all its grotesque and preposterous forms, but the offspring of this sublime principle, disguised by the monstrous deformities of plebeian credulity. For the moment, a classical taste and bold imagination reclaim and adopt them, how naturally do they in-

corporate with the purest poetry? Are they not then as graceful and captivating as ever they were ugly? The same absurd mishapen spectres, all the tragical tales of spells and incantations, of Magicians, Witches, Wizards, and Fairies, of Ghosts, Goblins, and Elves, which seem so frightful in the nursery, and are so shocking in the mouth of a clown, refined by the genius of Shakespeare, please in the closet, and ravish in the play-house. Thus the vulgar have their poetry as well as the learned, and all the difference is, that the former love and reverence as true, what the latter only admire and feel as fictitious.

WHATEVER breaks the dull uniformity of life, gives new play to the affections, or is an additional outlet to the heart, may be considered as a valuable acquisition to human nature.

Man's feeble race what ills await !  
 Labour and penury, the racks of pain,  
 Disease, and sorrow's weeping train,  
 And death, sad refuge from the ills of fate !  
 The fond complaint my song disprove,  
 And justify the laws of Jove.  
 Say, has he given in vain the heavenly muse ?  
 Night and all her sickly dews ;  
 Her spectres wan and birds of boding cry,  
 He gives to range the dreary sky.  
 Till down the eastern cliffs afar,  
 Hyperion's march they spy, and glittering shafts of war !

UNDER

UNDER the genial influence of poetry we reach a sublimer hemisphere, and breathe as it were a purer air. She begins our acquaintance and enlarges our correspondence with the innocent inhabitants of elysium; she insensibly destroys our grosser attachments, and lifts our hearts above trifles, gives us other views and other feelings; guides us by springs and motives but ill adapted to the littleness of a selfish world, and implants in our breasts a generous superiority to life, and other principles in abundance.

Beneath the good how far---but far above the great.

By this charming art, the mind no longer trammelled within the narrow circle of the senses, springs away, beyond the verge of reality and roams at large through all the wilds and regions of imagination. Wherever she takes her flight, a thousand new attractions bear on her view, all her tones are raised and tempered to the truest delicacy; emotions of the most pleasing and soothing, of the sweetest and softest kind awakened, her passions by turns thrown into the gentlest and most tumultuous agitations, and the whole circle of agreeable sensations, as if touched and realized by the magic of enchantment, assemble in unceasing variety and often ravish and surprise the reader as well as the writer. So that should the time ever come when a spirit so

liberal and benign shall give way to the savage dæmon of luxury and corruption, who would not join the poet's mournful apostrophe !

And thou sweet Poetry, thou loveliest maid ;  
 Still first to fly where sensual joys invade ;  
 Unfit in these degenerate times of shame,  
 To catch the heart or strike for honest fame ;  
 Dear charming nymph, neglected and decried,  
 My shame in crowds, my solitary pride.  
 Thou source of all my bliss and all my woe,  
 That found'st me poor at first and keeps me so ;  
 Thou guide by which the nobler arts excel,  
 Thou nurse of ev'ry virtue fare thee well !

SUCH is the fine contexture and beautiful symmetry of nature, that a certain inexplicable vein of sympathy runs through all her works. Things animate and inanimate affect each other in a manner perfectly mysterious. In what circumstance do not human affections at least, branch out and multiply. Even local attachments often constitute no small share of our happiness or misery. Like those shrubs which equally take root in every position and every soil, wherever we are, and wherever we go, our minds invariably cling to the objects around us. Now the peculiar business of all sentimental poetry is to trace minutely every fibre of the heart, through all the windings, intricacies, and variety of its motions, and to touch every occasional delicacy

cacy in its proper tone. This is the great archetype whence the genius of poetry borrows all her fairest and most elegant forms; whatever she creates or fabricates, is so far excellent only as it bears this resemblance, must still be in nature and truth, otherwise her fables were monsters without a likeness, were images without an original. For probability is that insuperable barrier which bounds her wildest excursions,—that invisible GENIUS, which clothes her most romantic scenes with beauty and proportion, which gives reality and life to her fictions, and which makes her most uncommon descriptions interesting, because it makes them natural.

It is the spirit alone, that distinguishes poetry, just as characters take their peculiar colouring from the cast or complexion of particular minds. The most absurd nonsense in the world, as it often does, may either drawl in measure, or straddle in rhyme. Pope, calls some of the poetry of his times, *prose run mad*. Most of ours, is, at best but prattle, or fustian in manacles. To make verses by the well known laws of cadence and quantity, or tag lines together by syllables of similar sounds, is an art which requires no invention at all, which may be accomplished without any vigorous exertion, so easy and mechanical, in short; that the greatest dunce in nature, by the mere dint of application, may acquire more facility in it, than a first rate genius. Hence poetry assumes every kind of dress,  
and

and is known alike in all; just as the elegant and graceful motions of a fine woman are seen and felt in every masque. So that I much doubt if any real Poet can write with success, in a counterfeit character. For either his ideas or expression must frequently betray him without the aid of numbers.

JOHNSON is such a slave to harmony, that he never speaks a word but in time. All his writings are equally and every where enriched with a vein of the purest and sublimest imagery. He has the genius in an eminent degree and wants nothing but the regularity of measure, or the prettiness of rhyme, to make him one of our most finished moral and sentimental poets.

IN his style, or a similar one, though surely with much more simplicity and fire, MILTON perhaps might have wrote, but for the age in which he lived. From his letter on Education, however, the following sentence breathes a fullness and harmony not inferior to the most elaborate one in the Rambler.

I shall detain you no longer in the demonstration of what we should not do, but straight conduct you to a hill side, where I will point you out the right path of a virtuous and noble education, laborious indeed at the first ascent, but else so smooth, so green, so full of goodly prospects and melodious sounds on every side, that the harp of Orpheus was not more charming.

THE muse of Sterne, though perhaps he never made a couplet in his life, we often surprise warbling as it were by accident in the sweetest and tenderest strains. Like the British Nightingale indeed she rarely prolongs her song, but her every note goes to the bottom of the heart. A more poetical idea never warmed the human imagination than that occasioned by uncle Toby's oath. His expression insensibly catches the sublimity of the thought.

The accusing spirit, which flew up to heaven's chancery with the oath, blushed as he gave it in, and the recording angel as he wrote it down, dropped a tear upon the word, and blotted it out for ever.

FLEXIBILITY is the great and principal characteristic of a dramatic genius. What wonderful versatility of thinking, speaking, and acting, marks the poetical powers of Shakespeare. The exhibition in the Jubilee, splendid and magnificent as it appears, is but a faint emblem of what figures, machinery and movements, warmed and occupied his large and fertile imagination. And yet through the whole range of the drama, is it not strange and unprecedented that his poetical spirit never forsakes him, never flags, but uniformly beats time from the highest to the lowest, with all the flexions and functions of humanity! It even seems peculiar condescension in his very Clowns to blab their buffoonry in prose.

WHAT

WHAT makes the Letters of Gray published by Mason, so engaging to readers of taste, but that they abound in poetical flights \*. Though he affects

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\* Wit and Dullness, are not more reconcilable than light and darkness; though they sometimes run into one another, by shades, totally imperceptible. Nature has established an eternal separation between them, which art, in vain, struggles to demolish. Thus all the conceptions, feelings, and estimations, of ordinary and original minds, are in a state of unalterable contrast. They agree in nothing but reciprocal upbraidings; for want of mutual acquiescence.—Genius is a species of enthusiasm, which none but a genius comprehends. Its movements, to all others, appear just as mysterious and eccentric as those of a comet. There is an ardour and pathos inseparable from its minutest exertions, which they do not understand because they do not feel, and which strike them only with an air of extravagance. Even in such compositions, as are expected to make the deepest impression, whatever touches most, is often most disliked. Why, for example, in the grave and solemn style; are the sallies of imagination so uniformly and prudishly reprobated? Is it, that these are incompatible with a manly vigour, or serious earnestness? No: While the mind is on the opposite extreme to every sensation of levity, the most affecting effusions of the deepest despair, are yet full of them. From these, she derives all her strength and energy. These give her an elevation and independance which create attention and respect. By these, she surmounts every obstacle, commands

to speak with some dislike of poetry in prose, no man indulges it more, and yet we still wish he had been less on his guard against it. His uncommon genius always struggles under restraint, but whenever

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mands conviction, and seizes the heart. Under the sanction of these, her sentiments rise to sublimity, and breathe an air of inspiration! The most polished expression, the closest reasoning, and the chastest eloquence in the world are good for nothing without poignancy. This is that true *attic salt* which discriminates every species of sterling poetry and oratory, from the frigid insipidity of didactic dullness; and which is so strangely and universally obnoxious to the sarcasms of the vulgar. Their aversion to every thing for which they have no relish is excuseable. They are culpable only, in thinking with a freedom, which they condemn in others. Hence, whatever captivates the affections, surprises the fancy, or strikes the attention, they denominate a *flight*, which in their dictionary is always a term of contempt. In truth, *flights* of this kind have been treated by every lettered and unlettered pedant, since the world began, with a sneer. Ask what they mean by that opprobrious term, and ten to one, they censure the best passage of the best book you can put into their hands.

Great wits, sometimes may gloriously offend,  
And rise to faults true critics dare not mend,  
From vulgar bounds with brave disorder part,  
And snatch a grace, beyond the reach of art.

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the miracles of nature pass before him, as they often do, she instantly shakes off the reins and bids defiance to all his precautions. How picturesque and particular the following short description of Kent. Though not sufficiently acquainted with the country to ascertain its justness, I feel its beauty, I think myself on the very spot, I see distinctly and minutely every object he mentions.

In the west part of it, from every eminence, the eye catches some long reach of the Thames or Medway, with all their shipping: in the east, the sea breaks in upon you, and mixes its white, transient sails, and glittering blue expanse, with the deeper and brighter greens of the woods and corn.

BUT the genius of poetry appears no where so lovely and engaging as when it mingles with the softness and delicacies of the female character. Among other strange features of the times, it is none of the least unaccountable, that the feminine genius never shone in fuller and sweeter majesty, yet never suffered such ungentle, ungenerous, and unmerited abuse as it does at present. Who knows not that this blessed principle is the chief lesson our youth are taught, from a late celebrated system of Politeness, as if good manners consisted in rudeness to the Ladies, or we should please only in proportion as we thought them contemptible. Their worth however to every candid and congenial mind,  
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is equally known and felt, in all the walks of domestic life. Though confined intirely to matters of pure taste and elegance, yet would it not be undeserving more general approbation. The author of *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakspear*, discovers an energy of thought, and a delicacy of sentiment, which rank her among our best poets, and raise her sex above the insolence and envy of all who affect to degrade them. Speaking of the origin of poetry, how beautifully does she enter into the spirit and enthusiasm she describes. I quote the passage, chiefly for the idea so philosophically just and poetical, that concludes it.

The ancient poet was admitted into the synod of the gods, he discoursed of their natures, he repeated their counsels, and without the charge of impiety or presumption, disclosed their dissensions, and published their vices. He peopled the woods with nymphs, the rivers with deities; and, that he might still have some being within call to his assistance, he placed responsive echo in the vacant regions of air.

IMITATION seems the only track in which all ordinary minds are doomed to trudge. Thus in life, as well as in writing; very few have either merit or magnanimity enough to burst the barriers of custom. We learn to move and do every thing, as formally, and as mechanically too, from the example and instruction of those around us, as parrots or magpies,

magpies, to chatter in their cage. This is the field which has been so very prolific of dunces in every nation and climate under heaven, where all sorts of literary vermin breed and swarm innumerable. Indeed, they could not live in another element. Here, to be sure, nature has sown them with a liberal hand, and, like her other productions, when misplaced, they become ridiculous, useless, or pernicious only, as transplanted by art.

AN Original, though accidentally situated, even in this shade, cannot long be hid. Like the oak, fling him where you will, he is always surely, however slowly, towering above his fellows, and aspiring to be Monarch of the forest. He often catches the very genius, and reflects the very spirit and fire of his master, sometimes improves and elevates him to a degree of perfection which he knew not before. How remarkably is this observation exemplified in Virgil and Milton. Homer, we must allow is the original author of that sublime species of poetry, in which they both excel. But does not the one refine, and the other exalt him. From the *first*, he receives that taste and purity which alone seemed wanting to the perfection of his strains; from the *second*, that majesty and magnificence to which there is nothing equal in human composition.

Both as a Dramatic and Lyric poet, Thomson has many equals, and many superiors. Though none  
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of these, seemed the walk, for which nature chiefly designed him; he thought it no disparagement to start with such a list of illustrious competitors, as then, occupied the road to fame. And it may be said of him, perhaps, with some justice, what can hardly be said of any other modern poet, that he has left nothing behind him, with the public, which has not a very considerable share of merit, which is not stamped with a sensibility and ardour worthy the Author of the Seasons.

BUT however he should rank in these respects, in this country at least, he may be stiled, I think with some propriety, the father of descriptive poetry. All our preceding poets of any eminence and character, had occasionally elevated their sentiments, and embellished their language, with various pictures and similitudes, from the endless and complicated scenery which nature exhibits in so many forms to the mind, and impresses in so many ways on the fancy. These Thomson constitutes his leading theme, views and celebrates exclusively.

PASTORAL poetry, is a simple delineation of those rural objects, with which, such as lead a pastoral life, may be supposed most acquainted. The best Eclogues we have, however, are no more than partial sketches of the identical spots to which they severally refer. Shepherds were in no period of history, in no quarter of the globe, distinguished either for delicacy of sentiment, or acuteness of  
C observation.

observation. And to make them speak the language of much intelligence, large experience, or strong thinking, would be out of all character, and consequently censurable in this kind of poetry. The line which Thomson chalked out for himself, laid him under none of these restrictions. And it was reserved for him, who had his birth and education among the bleak and desert wilds and hills of North Britain, to present the world with a graphical map of the year, to which there is no parallel; in this, or perhaps in any other language. Whatever is great and sublime, grotesque and horrible, picturesque and extraordinary, tender and affecting, beautiful and charming, in the whole circle of the seasons, among the vegetable, the animal, or the rational kingdoms, he characterizes in lineaments which none can mistake, in colours which no time can outlive!

AN English poet of the present age, to whom, esteemed as he is, the publick has not yet done sufficient justice; speaks of our author in a manner that does equal honour to his head and his heart. Superior to all those national partialities, "Those little things which seem so great to little men." After naming many of our best poets, he thus celebrates the Author of the Seasons.

—Next Thomson came,  
He, curious Bard, examin'd every drop  
That

That glistens on the thorn ; each leaf survey'd,  
Which Autumn from the rustling forest shakes,  
And mark'd its shape, and trac'd in the rude wind  
Its eddying motion. Nature in his hand  
A pencil, dip'd in her own colours, plac'd,  
With which the ever-faithful copieft drew  
Each feature in proportion just. Had art  
But soften'd the hard lines, and mellow'd down  
The glaring tints, not Mincio's self would roll  
A prouder stream than Caledonian Tweed.

## C H A P. II.

*On the Use and Abuse of Criticism.**Ten censure wrong for one who writes amiss.*

THE best, and perhaps the only proper use of Criticism, is the proscription of bad Authors. With these, every walk of literature swarms, and every classical production is pillaged. Indeed, the moment the art of writing is solely engrossed by the vulgar, it becomes contemptible. Nor are they less pernicious in all the departments of taste and science, than the most noxious vermin to the fruits of the ground. For it is not every one who is teased with the itch of scribbling—it is not every Dunce whose heart bounces with self-conceit—it is not every Pedant, who has loitered away his days in a college, among boys, books, and busts, that has a right to assume a tone of decision, and prescribe for the tastes and feelings of mankind. But vanity, the dupe of every mean and mercenary impulse, struts in every likeness, and prostitutes every character. And this is the great fountain, whence all those streams of dulness originate, which unavoidably deluge society with a torrent of absurd writing, and thinking, of false philosophy, and systematic nonsense.

SELFISH

SELFISH and abject minds, are eternally occupied in imitating and depreciating that worth, which they can neither reach nor suppress. Whatever they do, has only the shadow of excellence. They have no living but in the sphere; no character, but as satellites of genius. Nor could they exist, but for the nourishment she vouchsafes, but for the shelter she affords them. And yet, like the ungrateful ivy that undermines the wall, to which it clings for support, they exert their utmost endeavours in destroying the very cause, to which they owe their consequence.

THE literary, as well as the busy world, is every where over run with impostors. Which of the learned professions, for example, has not its conjurers? But all are not guilty alike. Their pretensions should therefore be tried by some infallible standard, that those who can, may at least have some chance of escaping the common reprobation. Here impartial criticism presides, and holds the balance with a steady and delicate hand. She never imputes that to them as a fault, which is only their misfortune, nor blames them so much for what they are, as for what they affect to be. This is that true Ithurian spear, by the slightest touches of which, every masque vanishes, and all things assume at once their own original and undisguised likeness.

DID we view things aright, nothing could strike us as more unseemly and preposterous than human pride. The proud man is always intruding, and always repulsed : Nor knows he any other feelings, than those alternately suggested by presumption this moment, and mortification the next. He would ever be above all, and all are for that reason, equally interested in keeping him down. There is a disposition in mankind to put him back, merely because he is constantly putting himself forward. We check impudence as naturally; as we wish to encourage modesty. To him no affection is so grateful as that of esteem ; no breath so sweet as that of applause ; no language so soothing as that of the most fulsome flattery. His own importance to himself, is too dear an idea, ever to render the most extravagant incense of this kind unacceptable. Continue to glut the ambition of his heart, by a fordid prostitution of your own, and you shall find him, of all men, the most candid, generous, and friendly. But the moment your simplicity betrays you into one syllable, that would rob him of the sacrifice he expects, his ideas of your subject will undergo a total revolution. He will instantly call your judgment in question, because it coincides not with his ; he will dislike you in proportion as he thinks you mistaken, and a resentment suggested by such invidious feelings, is likely to last for ever. Wounded pride is incurable, and disappointment  
is

is perhaps the only crime which an aspiring mind can never thoroughly forgive. This however, like most other inordinate affections, generally overshoots its mark, but never so effectually as when it borrows the crutches of dulness, and becomes infamous, solely by grasping at fame. Nothing but detection and reprobation are due, to all such claims, as have no foundation in truth. On those, who from the worst intentions, put on the best appearances, we cannot be too severe. And who knows not, that dunces are commonly as pernicious in science, as noxious in literature, as hypocrites in religion. Indeed, they act the same part, and meet with a similar reward. Presumption is the crime, and contempt the punishment of both.

PERHAPS, nothing more debilitates the liberal and manly spirit of true criticism, than a memory overloaded with dead and foreign languages, and a head enveloped in theories and syllogisms. Genius may break through these clouds, and like the sun in a vapoury sky, shine with additional solemnity and magnificence, from the darkness and gloom that seems to intercept its splendour, but all others must be lost and expire in the fog. Erudition operates on common minds, like a hearty meal on sickly stomachs; it lies an undigested load, and produces a fever, that puts all their faculties out of order. Altogether ignorant of such ideas as real impressions of nature stamp on the mind,

they rashly pronounce on every thing by certain pre-conceptions wrought into a system by art, and the ancients, sanctified by dulness, and propagated from a slavish reverence for popular opinion. Whatever corresponds with this standard, they indiscriminately applaud, but woe unto the Author, woe unto the work, and woe unto the passage which does not.

For my own part I really do not see much utility. I am sure there is sometimes no great merit, and always very little pleasure in exposing the blemishes of original writers. A poet would tell us, they are peculiarly sacred to fame, and that her voice is an everlasting attendant on their *shade*. “Mortals!” she says, “respect with a mixture of admiration  
“and tenderness, the memory of my sons. Their  
“laurels are the boons of heaven, and for their  
“immortality, heaven itself is responsible. Their  
“works are intended not to provoke your cen-  
“sure, but to stimulate your emulation. Open  
“your hearts to the pleasures they import, and  
“shut your eyes against the slips they discover.  
“But expect not to imitate their blunders with im-  
“punity, unless you can also make the same atone-  
“ment which they made, by reaching an equal  
“degree of perfection with them. Till then, mo-  
“desty is the least respect you owe them, and per-  
“haps the only way you can do them no injury,  
“is never to mention them, but in terms of ap-  
“probation.”

THIS

THIS scrupulous attention to their failures, is methinks, at best, but a poor return for the infinite pains they have taken to entertain and instruct us. With this friendly intention they have done at least as well as they could, and we are so strangely capricious as to chide and censure them for not doing better. Indeed, there is no end, at all, to the captious demands of petulance and presumption. Instead of looking up with gratitude to those generous benefactors of mankind who have thus contributed so liberally to their improvement and perfection; instead of receiving their donations with affectionate humility, like the plebeian cur, we snarl and snap at the very hand that feeds us.

FAULTS, in the vicinity of great beauties, may escape observation, and taste receive some improvement from discrimination. No performance, it will also be alledged, can plead exemption from criticism, because the Republic of Letters is deeply interested in her decision. Indeed, the more excellent any performance is, the more necessary does it become to ascertain its merit, and point out its defects, lest novices in literature should blindly admire, and imitate the very blunders of favourite Authors.

UNDER this plausible but trite pretext, pedantry with more than pontifical solemnity, has fulminated her rules and canons in all ages. Hence the most exalted and glorious conceptions that ever cha-

characterised the circle of superiour minds, have sometimes been estimated by the partial opinion of those who had really no conceptions at all. Nor does it unfrequently happen, that ignorance, and the spleen sit professed, arbiters of wisdom and wit. Oh Shakespéare, thou first and sweetest of bards, what though nature lavished on thee her choicest gifts, and bade thee shine forth the wonder and delight of succeeding ages ! How often has not art, with presumptuous rashness, set bounds to thy fancy, and condemned thee only, because unable to keep thee company ? Not all the classical ardour that fired thy heart, not all the sensibilities that mingle in thy strains, not all the lovely forms that wanton at thy call, nor all the visionary creations, graceful and captivating as they are, that elevate thy muse beyond a rival, keep thy critics at defiance, or inspire them with one sentiment of modesty and discretion. Go, ye quibbling generation, and fret yourselves by marking the spots, while others are charmed with the beams of the sun. You are no more qualified to decide on the flights of Genius, than the deaf on the fitness of musical harmony and expression. And the Poet's sarcasm will sting, when your pitiful comments are forgotten.

In what retreat, inglorious and unknown,  
Did genius sleep, when dulness seiz'd the throne ?

Most

Most readers regard not half so much the principles, as the effects of good poetry. And all who judge for themselves, most certainly, and justly, despise the arbitrary decisions of criticism, which clash with their own sensations. Surely, men of taste and genius, need not be told, in perusing a poem, or work of merit, when to censure and applaud. If light does not rise spontaneously, all the scientific jargon, from Aristotle down to Bentley, will not produce it. You may as well bid the dead rise, as the phlegmatic feel. Our judgment here, must be guided solely by our own hearts. Whatever gives us pleasure, challenges our esteem; and our praise is still in proportion to the delight we receive. We do not mind what critic may have damned the passage. As we pronounce entirely, and only for ourselves, it strikes us as good or bad, merely as it does, or does not produce in our minds that sensibility and warmth which the author intended. To this purpose, the following pointed maxim of Pope, is founded in nature and experience.

A perfect judge, will read each work of wit,  
With the same spirit that its author writ.

THE vulgar then, are the only gainers by this species of criticism. But, I beseech you, in what? Can it give them perceptions which Nature did not?

not ? It may whet their minds with petulance, and tincture their tempers with acrimony, but affords neither wings to fancy, nor sublimity to thought. No. Genius is the inspiration of Heaven, and to feel, we must, in some measure, share its energy. I would as soon expect an ass to be tutored and beaten into the stateliness and vivacity of a steed, as that a dunce, with all the tutelage of art, could be made either to comprehend or imitate the genial excursions of poetry. By drudgery indeed, a swarm of mere mechanical artificers, may in time, be conjured up, who shall carry their unhallowed impositions, into the regions of imagination ; and, by the sanction of prescription, supplant the fires of Apollo. But their existence is as temporary as it is pernicious. Like every thing beneath immortality, they live but to die. And does that art deserve to be cultivated, which is thus calculated only to give a momentary but impudent eclat to dulness.

A FASTIDIOUS taste, to say the least of it, is a very troublesome companion. It delights in obtruding things with which no wise man would willingly cultivate an acquaintance, and turning up to your view, whatever most requires to be kept out of sight. From this prolific source of vexation and caprice, most of our present unhappiness springs. It debilitates the judgment, renders the temper querulous and lofty, gives the mind too fine an edge

edge for life, and by frequently irritating, deadens at last, the best feelings of the heart. You may call it, if you will, the microscope of the understanding, which possesses this peculiar quality; that it lessens every excellence and magnifies every deformity.

SOME minds are unhappily tortured with dispositions so extremely unfavourable to their own comfort, that they seldom or never have it in their power to be pleased. Under the vicious influence of this barbarous kind of refinement, these dull and dark apprehensions assimilate only with the dullest and darkest objects. They assiduously avoid the light in which true worth is best seen, and are eternally poking into every bye corner, with an unnatural and unseemly attachment to their own infelicity. And such, all the world over, are pedants in literature, quacks in science, hypocrites in friendship, and enthusiasts in religion. Thus, nothing affords an asylum to simplicity from the dark designs of malevolence; honesty itself is not exempted from the foulest imputations; innocence often bleeds at the unrelenting shrine of suspicion, and genius, that deserved a better fate, sometimes perishes an inglorious victim to the rude animadversions of false delicacy.

PERSONS of strong sensibility, not sufficiently fortified with a proportionable share of good sense, are extremely liable to this; and, indeed, to every  
fort

fort of affectation. Their fancies, blasted by pride and peevishness, get quite the better of their judgments, circumstance and shew engross their whole attention. They have not a thought but how they may shine, nor do a deed but with a view to swell their own importance. It is not intrinsic merit, but mere exterior, that attracts their esteem. Perspicuity and ease in writing, without frippery and finesse, like candour of mind and simplicity of conduct, have in their eyes no charms. You may hear them chime the terms through all their changes, with a most tiresome prudery; but the idea evaporates in the very sound that conveys it. Take them on their own word, they are perfectly sentimental; consult your own feelings, and you will find they want an heart. In short, they are pleased only with what forcibly strikes their senses, dazzles their imaginations, or agitates their passions.

IN common life, we may sometimes observe, the gestures that are least strong and prominent, to be most sentimental and striking. There is a very emphatical softness inseparably connected with the exterior of elegant minds. A word, a sigh, a look, insensibility itself, under a peculiar description, goes to the very bottom of our souls. Ideas of this kind, expressed with ease and energy, produce all that sweet romantic and picturesque tenderness, which, to persons of true taste, so remarkably distinguish

distinguish and endear the writings of Otway, Richardson and Sterne. But even these beauties could never have become so popular as they are, apart from circumstances, plots, incidents, and all the machinery of fiction with which they stand connected, and which are more generally interesting, only because more noisy and tumultuous. Few, even of those who would be thought moral writers, few critics, and still fewer readers, transfer their attention from minuteness of expression, to the secret movements of the heart. How many prefer formality and affectation, in all their gigantic and preposterous shapes, to the most amiable and unassuming simplicity. Their favourite authors are not those, who abound most in nature and truth, who write as they feel, and who touch the master springs of human attachment, because they never lose sight of life and manners, but those, who are either choked with abstraction, larded with trifles, poisoned with opinions, or fermented with Romance.

THESE observations, with many others that might be suggested to the same purpose, have given me a thorough aversion for that sort of criticism, which shews no more veneration for the monuments of genius, than for the mole-hills of a dunce. I may, however, be wrong; I speak only for myself. Such a solitary and inconsiderable voice as mine, can make few proselytes, and need give no offence. It might perhaps be for my interest,

terest, in more things than one, both to think and speak as others do.—Ye men of erudition and science, suffer me to contemplate and admire you at a distance. It is not for the vulgar to peep into mysteries. While Reason and Sentiment are at variance, while Taste and Sensibility continue irreconcilable, while Criticism reigns independent of Nature and the heart; give me ignorance, give me barbarity, give me any thing but a quibbling head and a captious temper. Only permit me to indulge my own humour, and gratify my fancy the best way I can. Trouble not yourselves circumscribing the movements of my affections, nor tell me, that my bosom should not warm, that my heart should not melt, that my eyes should not water, when they do. Blast not because you deign not to share my humble enjoyments. Either forbear your censures, give me other sensations, or blame me less for what I have. It is likely after all, and why should it not, that you will continue to censure, and I to enjoy. Nor take it amiss, that the authors you sometimes treat with so little mercy, afford, notwithstanding, so much delight. For so capricious is the taste of the public, that others will always read, though you should always rail.

C H A P. III.

On Thomson's Powers of Description.

IT seems almost unnecessary to remark, that by *descriptive poetry* here, we chiefly mean what refers to external nature, and what has no direct or immediate connection either with the human character, or any department of social life. Now that the view should be properly bounded, that every thing should be distinctly specified, that all the objects should be coloured from Nature, are three particulars which, to one who knows but little of the art, appear peculiarly indispensable in landscape painting. Do but examine the *Seasons* by these principles, and you should find them preserved almost inviolate through the whole poem.

S E C T. I.

THE first of these rules refers to what critics have called, in the canting and technical jargon of their art, *unity of subject*. In this respect, no Poet ever trod on more slippery ground, or had a more difficult point to manage, than Thomson. Distinct as the seasons of the year may seem to a superficial observer, the weather, the objects, and the sentiments which discriminate them most, yet

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run into one another, especially in our variable climate, with inconceivable delicacy. How often are we not almost as cold and uncomfortable in some days of Summer, as in many of Winter; little less languid in Spring, than in Summer; and hardly more spiritless and exhausted in Autumn, perhaps, on many occasions, than in any other month of the year. No wonder our Poet is sometimes betrayed into slips of this kind. Hence he stumbles on the very threshold, and speaks in the first period of his *Spring*, of *Musick veil'd in a shower of shadowing roses*. These delicate and tender flowers are not certainly quite so early in our island. Had he wrote in a warmer climate, where vegetation is much more forward than here, fact, perhaps, might have countenanced this beautiful exordium.

It may, however, not a little soften this, and other criticisms of a similar class, that Thomson, in every season, generally transports his readers to that part of the globe which feels and discovers its influence most remarkably. In *Spring*, for example, his enthusiasm, of which he had a very liberal share, insensibly flings him among those enchanting climes, where the rayages of Winter are never felt so fiercely, and where Nature struggles not so hardly as with us, in accomplishing a general renovation. Not satisfied with describing the mild and temperate influence of Summer in England, he

he gives a view of it, in its most fervid and insufferable empire, where vegetables, animals and mankind, are almost scorched to death, and obnoxious to all the inclemency of a parched earth, a sulphureous air, and a vertical *Sun*. Fertile as our fields are, he reminds us of others, which are still blessed with more irriguous soils, more genial sun-shine, more bountiful harvests, and vineyards loaded with a richer and better store. His Muse flies on the wings of Winter, through the frozen territories of the Polar Circle, and peers over the dreary horrors of that dark inhospitable region, where frost piles up her liquid stores in mountains of inflexible ice, the summits of which, mingle with the clouds.

It does singular honour to the taste and discernment of our speculative Bard, that he is so particularly careful never to specify an object, common to all the seasons, in any but that one, in which it is either most frequent, or most striking.

How natural and unavoidable to a fancy like his, while descanting at large, on every beauty of reviving Nature, to trace the mysterious progress of the same principle in the animal tribes. The passion of love is not limited in its operations, to any particular season of the year, more than another; but now was the time to compliment and delineate that generous and divine sympathy, which so exclusively moulds and controuls the sexes, at least,

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in the spring-time of life. And you shall hardly, in all the excursions of poetry, find a passage in which a rational and sentimental attachment is more charmingly and feelingly illustrated.

But happy they ! the happiest of their kind !  
 Whom gentler stars unite, and in one fate  
 Their hearts, their fortunes, and their beings blend.  
 'Tis not the coarser tie of human laws,  
 Unnatural oft, and foreign to the mind,  
 That binds their peace, but harmony itself,  
 Attuning all their passions into love ;  
 Where friendship full-exerts her softest power,  
 Perfect esteem enlivened by desire  
 Ineffable, and sympathy of soul ;  
 Thought meeting thought, and will preventing will,  
 With boundless confidence : for nought but love  
 Can answer love, and render bliss secure.  
 Let him, ungenerous, who, alone intent  
 To bless himself, from fordid parents buys  
 The loathing virgin, in eternal care,  
 Well-merited, consume his nights and days :  
 Let barbarous nations, whose inhuman love  
 Is wild desire, fierce as the suns they feel ;  
 Let eastern tyrants, from the light of Heaven  
 Seclude their bosom-slaves, meanly possess'd  
 Of a meer, lifeless, violated form :  
 While those whom love cements in holy faith,  
 And equal transport, free as Nature live,  
 Disdaining fear. What is the world to them,  
 Its pomp, its pleasure, and its nonsense all !  
 Who in each other clasp whatever fair

High

High fancy forms, and lavish hearts can wish;  
Something than beauty dearer, should they look  
Or on the mind, or mind-illumin'd face;  
Truth, goodness, honour, harmony, and love,  
The richest bounty of indulgent Heaven.  
Meantime a smiling offspring rises round,  
And mingles both their graces. By degrees,  
The human blossom blows; and every day,  
Soft as it rolls along, shews some new charm,  
The father's lustre, and the mother's bloom.  
Then infant reason grows apace, and calls  
For the kind hand of an assiduous care.  
Delightful task! to rear the tender thought,  
To teach the young idea how to shoot,  
To pour the fresh instruction o'er the mind,  
To breathe th' enlivening spirit, and to fix  
The generous purpose in the glowing breast.  
Oh speak the joy! ye, whom the sudden tear  
Surprizes often, while you look around,  
And nothing strikes your eye but sights of bliss,  
All various Nature pressing on the heart:  
An elegant sufficiency, content,  
Retirement, rural quiet, friendship, books,  
Ease and alternate labour, useful life,  
Progressive virtue, and approving Heaven.  
These are the matchless joys of virtuous love;  
And thus their moments fly. The Seasons thus,  
As ceaseless round a jarring world they roll,  
Still find them happy; and consenting Spring  
Sheds her own rosy garland on their heads:  
Till evening comes at last, serene and mild;  
When after the long vernal day of life,

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Enamour'd more, as more remembrance swells  
 With many a proof of recollected love,  
 Together down they sink in social sleep;  
 Together freed, their gentle spirits fly  
 To scenes where love and bliss immortal reign.

THE transition is equally proper and affecting, from the sultry heats of summer to a thunder storm, from the mildest to the most alarming and majestic scenes, that mark the Omnipotence of Nature. Here we behold the hemisphere loaded with portentous clouds; the air teem with nitrous vapours; the face of Heaven deepen all round into one thick forboding aspect; the winged tribes lower to the earth; the beasts of the field, as if stunned by some invisible power, stand and gaze in stupid terror; and all Nature, silent and pensive throughout, as if hushed on purpose to heighten and solemnize the tempest. Then begin the clouds to let loose their fiery contents; the forked lightnings twist and flash, and blaze about with a fearful and threatening velocity; the thunders growl horribly tremendous; the rains fall in torrents; a death-like calm ensues; the sun peers through the watery sky, and mankind mourn the mangled face of things.

IN Autumn too, while his Muse, like the grateful husbandman she describes, surveys, with a glad exulting heart, the envied riches of good old England, the liberal Genius of Industry, Commerce,

merce; Navigation, with all their sister and attendant arts, step forth and claim their share in the patriotic song. At their approach she exalts her voice, assumes a bolder note, and inspired by the dignity of the subject, sounds defiance to neighbouring nations.

How just and well timed, as well as classical and instructive, his apostrophe to the Heroes of antiquity, whose story still continues to be a fund of the richest erudition and delight, to all the lovers of science, especially in winter evenings. Often, as he adorns and enlivens his poem with strictures on the feathered creation, he judiciously reserves the social *Red-breast*, till now, as the best opportunity of doing justice to his merit. There is something so meaning and sentimental, so very picturesque and homely, in his account of this little well known popular bird, that you cannot but indulge the quotation.

The Red-breast, sacred to the household gods,  
Wisely regardful of th' embroiling sky;  
In joyless fields, and thorny thickets, leaves  
His shivering mates, and pays to trusted man  
His annual visit. Half afraid, he first  
Against the window beats; then brisk, alights  
On the warm hearth; then hopping o'er the floor,  
Eyes all the smiling family askance,  
And pecks, and starts, and wonders where he is.

THOMSON'S imagination, is indeed, copious and fiery, but his judgment is also strong and penetrating. He conceives and executes with a generous and glowing ardour; but is seldom or never the dupe of forced connections, or false resemblances. His thoughts, which rarely expand around him, bear onward as it were in a straight line, in so much, that all his collateral descriptions, like the branches of a tree, either spring spontaneously, or are grafted with inimitable grace, on whatever constitutes the leading burden of his song.

YOUNG, with a genius truly original and sublime, is however perpetually starting from his theme, and plunging into obscurity, by grasping at something foreign to his plan. Perhaps, we might have said, at least with equal propriety, that he writes without any settled plan at all. This, no doubt, gives his muse sufficient latitude, and often startles his Reader, with the novelty of his transitions, and the richness of his sentiments; but, much oftner disgusts, with an obvious want of taste and a manifest contempt of decorum. Thomson is never absent, where you wish to find him; never incoherent, never tawdry; never tempts the mind to wander from the leading idea to which he first excites her attention.

Thus all his Episodes are introduced with great and wonderful propriety. Here we have no over  
straining,

straining, nothing far-fetched, nothing lugged in at random, as an auxiliary serving with reluctance. Wherever he carries you, it is nature all, genuine and uncorrupted throughout. No exotics are forced on your view. Every spot under the genial and propitious influence of his descriptive talents, abounds with its own productions.

IN what a fine classical vein of sentimental poetry does he close his thunder scene, with the pathetic story of Amelia's fate; who innocent and beautiful as she was, expires by a stroke of lightning, in the very arms of her lover. Indeed, no poet ever traced the hidden workings of the finer affections more minutely than he did. Ah! what tender sentiments will not genius produce when thus connected with a feeling heart. What a lively impression does this affecting catastrophe leave on the sympathetic mind? These are strokes of Nature which none but a master can draw.

——— Young Celadon

And his Amelia were a matchless pair;  
With equal virtue form'd, and equal grace,  
The same, distinguish'd by their sex alone:  
Hers the mild lustre of the blooming morn,  
And his the radiance of the risen day.

They lov'd: but such their guileless passion was,  
As in the dawn of time inform'd the heart  
Of innocence, and undissembling truth.

'Twas friendship heightened by the mutual wish,

Th'

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Th' enchanting hope, and sympathetic glow,  
Beam'd from the mutual eye. Devoting all  
To love, each was to each a dearer self;  
Supremely happy in th' awakened power  
Of giving joy. Alone, amid the shades,  
Still in harmonious intercourse they liv'd  
The rural day, and talk'd the flowing heart,  
Or sigh'd and look'd unutterable things.

So pass'd their life, a clear united stream;  
By care untroubled; till, in evil hour,  
The tempest caught them on the tender walk,  
Heedless how far, and where its mazes stray'd,  
While, with each other blest, creative love  
Still bade eternal Eden smile around.

Prefaging instant fate her bosom heav'd  
Unwonted sighs, and stealing oft a look  
Of the big gloom on Celadon her eye  
Fell tearful, wetting her disordered cheek.

In vain assuring love, and confidence  
In Heaven, repress'd her fear; it grew, and shook  
Her frame near dissolution. He perceiv'd  
Th' unequal conflict, and as angels look  
On dying saints, his eyes compassion shed,  
With love illumin'd high. "Fear not, he said,

"Sweet innocence! thou stranger to offence,  
"And inward storm! He, who yon skies involves  
"In frowns of darkness, ever smiles on thee  
"With kind regard. O'er thee the secret shaft  
"That wastes at midnight, or th' undreaded hour  
"Of noon, flies harmless: and that very voice,  
"Which thunders terror thro' the guilty heart,  
"With tongues of seraphs whispers peace to thine.

" 'Tis

“ 'Tis safety to be near thee sure, and thus  
“ To clasp perfection !” From his void embrace,  
Mysterious Heaven ! that moment, to the ground,  
A blackened corse, was struck the beauteous maid.  
But who can paint the lover, as he stood,  
Pierc'd by severe amazement, hating life,  
Speechless, and fix'd in all the death of woe !  
So, faint resemblance ! on the marble tomb,  
The well-dissembled mourner stooping stands,  
For ever silent, and for ever sad.

HIS description of the rural bath, and the incident it suggests, are natural and interesting. The fortunate discovery of Damon on that occasion, the proof he gives in his modesty and diffidence, of a chaste and respectful attachment, and the generous acknowledgment of his bashful mistress, are touched with inimitable delicacy and tenderness. There is, in the whole Episode, such a beautiful assemblage of the most luxuriant images, yet couched in a language so peculiarly inoffensive and expressive ; the scene is wrought up with so much nature and novelty, with so many incidents and emotions ; and the unaffected dignity of the tender passion, is so well supported in all its ancient and rural energy and simplicity, that my Readers, whether old or young, though dead to all the delicacies of taste, if not also dead to the genuine workings of two virtuous and sentimental hearts, thus  
smitten

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smitten with a mutual flame, cannot but be pleased  
with a perusal of the passage entire.

Close in the covert of an hazel copse,  
Where winded into pleasing solitudes  
Runs out the rambling dale, young Damon sat,  
Pensive, and pierc'd with love's delightful pangs.  
There to the stream that down the distant rocks  
Hoarse murmuring fell, and plaintive breeze that play'd  
Among the bending willows, falsely he  
Of Musidora's cruelty complain'd.  
She felt his flame ; but deep within her breast,  
In bashful coyness, or in maiden pride,  
The soft return conceal'd : save when it stole  
In side-long glances from her downcast eye,  
Or from her swelling soul in stifled sighs.  
Touch'd by the scene, no stranger to his vows,  
He fram'd a melting lay, to try her heart :  
And, if an infant passion struggled there,  
To call that passion forth. Thrice happy swain !  
A lucky chance, that oft decides the fate  
Of mighty monarchs, then decided thine.  
For lo ! conducted by the laughing loves,  
This cool retreat his Musidora sought :  
Warm in her cheek the sultry season glow'd ;  
And rob'd in loose array, she came to bathe  
Her fervent limbs in the refreshing stream.  
What shall he do ? In sweet confusion lost,  
And dubious flutterings, he a while remain'd :  
A pure ingenuous elegance of soul,  
A delicate refinement, known to few,

Perplex'd

Perplex'd his breast, and urg'd him to retire :  
But love forbade. Ye prudes in virtue, say,  
Say, ye severest, what would you have done ?  
Meantime, this fairer nymph than ever blest  
Arcadian stream, with timid eye around  
The banks surveying, stripp'd her beauteous limbs,  
To taste the lucid coolness of the flood.  
Ah then ! not Paris on the piny top  
Of Ida panted stronger, when aside  
The rival goddesses the veil divine  
Cast unconfin'd, and gave him all their charms,  
Than, Damon, thou ; as from the snowy leg,  
And slender foot, th' inverted silk she drew ;  
As the soft touch dissolv'd the virgin zone ;  
And, thro' the parting robe, th' alternate breast,  
With youth wild-throbbing, on thy lawless gaze  
In full luxuriance rose. But, desperate youth,  
How durst thou risque the soul-distracting view ;  
As from her naked limbs, of glowing white,  
Harmonious swell'd by nature's finest hand,  
In folds loose-floating fell the fainter lawn ;  
And fair-expos'd she stood, shrunk from herself,  
With fancy blushing, at the doubtful breeze  
Alarm'd, and starting like the fearful fawn ?  
Then to the flood she rush'd ; the parted flood  
Its lovely guest with closing waves receiv'd ;  
And every beauty softening, every grace  
Flushing anew, a mellow lustre shed :  
As shines the lily thro' the crystal mild ;  
Or as the rose amid the morning dew,  
Fresh from Aurora's hand, more sweetly glows.

While

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While thus she wanton'd, now beneath the wave  
 But ill-conceal'd; and now with streaming locks,  
 That half-embrac'd her in a humid veil,  
 Rising again, the latent Dämon drew  
 Such madning draughts of beauty to the soul,  
 As for a while o'erwhelm'd his raptur'd thought  
 With luxury too daring. Check'd, at last,  
 By love's respectful modesty, he deem'd  
 The theft profane, if aught profane to love  
 Can e'er be deem'd; and struggling from the shade,  
 With headlong hurry fled: but first these lines,  
 Trac'd by his ready pencil, on the bank  
 With trembling hand he threw. "Bathe on, my fair,  
 "Yet unbeheld save by the sacred eye  
 "Of faithful love: I go to guard thy haunt,  
 "To keep from thy recess each vagrant foot,  
 "And each licentious eye." With wild surprise,  
 As if to marble struck, devoid of sense,  
 A stupid moment motionless she stood:  
 So stands the statue that enchants the world,  
 So bending tries to veil the matchless boast,  
 The mingled beauties of exulting Greece.  
 Recovering, swift she flew to find those robes  
 Which blissful Eden knew not; and, array'd  
 In careless haste, th' alarming paper snatch'd.  
 But, when her Dämon's well known hand she saw,  
 Her terrors vanished, and a softer train  
 Of mixt emotions, hard to be describ'd,  
 Her sudden bosom seiz'd: shame void of guilt,  
 The charming blush of innocence, esteem  
 And admiration of her lover's flame,

By

By modesty exalted: even a sense -  
Of self approving beauty stole across -  
Her busy thought. At length a tender calm  
Hush'd by degrees the tumult of her soul;  
And on the spreading beech, that o'er the stream  
Incumbent hung, she with the silvan pen  
Of rural lovers this confession carv'd,  
Which soon her Damon kiss'd with weeping joy:  
"Dear youth! sole judge of what these verses mean,  
"By fortune too much favour'd, but by love,  
"Alas! not favour'd less, be still as now  
"Discreet: the time may come you need not fly."

BUT the well known story of Palemon and Lavinia, does equal honour to the warmth of his heart, and the justness of his taste. As he intends it for a panegyric on Benevolence and Humanity, the introduction of it here, is happy and striking. For it follows an exhortation which he urges with an earnestness that marks the good man, not less than it does the true poet.

Be not too narrow, husbandmen! but fling  
From the full sheaf, with charitable stealth,  
The liberal handful. Think, oh grateful think!  
How good the God of harvest is to you;  
Who pours abundance o'er your flowing fields;  
While these unhappy partners of your kind  
Wide hover round you, like the fowls of heaven,  
And ask their humble dole. The various turns

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Of fortune ponder ; that your sons may want  
What now, with hard reluctance, faint, ye give.

THE story of the man perishing in snow, is to say the least, finely and feelingly told. This accident, is the more natural and affecting, that it happens so frequently among those wild romantic hills and desarts in the South of Scotland, where our poet was born. There we have but few beaten tracks, and only mere foot-paths, through the fields, from one house to another; which by the way, are often single, and situated at a most uncomfortable and inconvenient distance. Trees, which mark the face of the country best, in the time of snow; you, who have read Johnson's snarling remarks, must be sensible are but rare; and it must be confessed, there are no hedges at all, as here \*, lining our publick roads. So that, to travel without a trusty guide, through such a country, in such circumstances, where every thing dazzles and confounds the sight, and where the general aspect of nature is so totally disguised, to a stranger at least, is certain destruction.

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\* The writer composed this part of the work, about thirty miles from London; in the vicinity of an extensive heath, furrounded with several large and full grown woods.

As thus the snows arise; and foul, and fierce,  
All winter drives along the darkened air;  
In his own loose revolving fields, the swain  
Disaster'd stands; sees other hills ascend,  
Of unknown joyless brow: and other scenes,  
Of horrid prospect, shag the trackless plain:  
Nor finds the river, nor the forest, hid  
Beneath the formless wild; but wanders on  
From hill to dale, still more and more astray;  
Impatient flouncing thro' the drifted heaps,  
Stung with the thoughts of home; the thoughts of home  
Rush on his nerves, and call their vigour forth  
In many a vain attempt. How sinks his soul!  
What black despair, what horror fills his heart!  
When for the dusky spot, which fancy feign'd  
His tufted cottage rising thro' the snow,  
He meets the roughness of the middle waste,  
Far from the track, and blest abode of man;  
While round him night resistless closes fast,  
And every tempest, howling o'er his head,  
Renders the savage wilderness more wild.  
Then throng the bushy shapes into his mind,  
Of cover'd pits, unfathomably deep,  
A dire descent! beyond the power of frost;  
Of faithless bogs; of precipices huge,  
Smooth'd up with snow; and, and what is land, un-  
known,  
What water of the still unfrozen spring,  
In the loose marsh or solitary lake,  
Where the fresh fountain from the bottom boils.  
These check his fearful steps; and down he sinks  
Beneath the shelter of the shapeless drift,

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Thinking o'er all the bitterness of death,  
 Mix'd with the tender anguish nature shoots  
 Thro' the wrung bosom of the dying man,  
 His wife, his children, and his friends unseen.  
 In vain for him th' officious wife prepares  
 The fire fair blazing, and the vestment warm ;  
 In vain his little children, peeping out  
 Into the mingling storm, demand their fire,  
 With tears of artless innocence. Alas !  
 Nor wife, nor children, more shall he behold,  
 Nor friends, nor sacred home. On every nerve  
 The deadly winter seizes ; shuts up sense ;  
 And, o'er his inmost vitals creeping cold,  
 Lays him along the snows, a stiffened corse,  
 Stretched out, and bleaching in the northern blast.

It has often struck me, that on a subject so trite, where poets and orators, of all kingdoms, periods, and kinds, have so frequently indulged and gratified their talents of description, Thomson should find, notwithstanding, so much new matter, and so many original sentiments. It confirms me in an opinion, I have long entertained, in common, perhaps, with every one who thinks on the subject, that nature appears uniformly the same to none of us ; that every mind has something distinguishing in its structure and operations, from another, and, that we have all our own way of thinking, whenever we do think, and drop it only, in a slavish imitation of others. Our poet never indulges common-place remark, or wishes to make a profusion of splendid phrases

com-

compensate the want of ideas. He dictates invariably from his own sensations, and his *Seasons* is a faithful copy of all those various feelings, which the various appearances of the year unavoidably occasion, in minds polished by the purest taste, and exalted by the best philosophy. This, preserves him equally from all extremes. The great outlines of his plan, continue unbroken throughout. Nor, are the intermediate parts, in the least overloaded, disgraced, or debilitated, by adscitious or extra materials. And, he no where, either soars above his Reader's intelligence, or struggles with an ill-mannered officiousness to establish an acquaintance between them, and things beneath their concern,

## S E C T. II.

BUT, just arrangement is not the only thing essential to masterly description. Objects in poetry, as well as in painting, should exhibit their natural and respective characters, at the same time, they occupy, their natural and respective positions. This maxim, if a just one, is methinks singly sufficient, to place the descriptive genius of Thomson in the most advantageous point of view.

WANT of real discrimination, is the great defect which runs through the paltry poetry of the times, which degrades, indeed, all sorts of composition

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alike; and which is the true stamp, by which the most genuine offspring of dulness, are every where known and distinguished. Ordinary minds are seldom struck with any thing, because they never think of particularizing either what they see, or feel. The association of ideas, is to them no object at all; or, at least, but an indivisible one. And all the little pother and fuss they make, through the various departments they fill, and the multiplicity of shapes they assume, is but an echo, which dies with the sound that begets, or the situation that occasions it. A real *Genius* never rests in generals, never runs in a circle: but, like the melted wax, gives in vivid and glowing characters, the identical impression it receives. Such was Thomson. He presents us not with scenes, which others only have seen, or endeavours to interest his reader's in a tale, which he has merely from report. No; he relates nothing but what he felt, and saw, and examined, with an ardent and indefatigable curiosity. And he possesses the singular talent of hitting the very feature; by which things of the greatest resemblance, of the nearest likeness, are yet known to be essentially distinct.

WHOEVER knows from experience, how distinctly the objects of vallies appear from the summit of lofty mountains; must regret, that this country with all its richness and variety, affords so few magnificent and picturesque prospects.

Where-

Wherever we look around us, groups of things seem huddled together, in one vast undistinguishable mass ! Our views are almost every where imperfect, because being so much on a level with the objects ; they are generally horizontal. And while the interstitial spaces are hid, the relation and dependence of objects, which often constitute their most beautiful characteristics, are totally shaded. In all champaign countries, however variegated with woods, and fields, and meadows ; large rivers, little streams, flowery parterres, groves, gardens, glebes, villas, and hamlets innumerable ; there is really no extensive, no delightful prospect. The eye is bewildered, and wanders unsettled, amidst a vast croud of things which distract her attention. The banks of a river, though embroidered with all the luxuriance of nature, in her gayest forms, are never seen at any convenient distance. Now all our senses occupy a certain medium, beyond which their functions are proportionably defective. And, we may be sometimes too nigh, as well as too distant. In the situation supposed, we discern all things in the gross, nothing by itself. Proximate objects then strike us only in profile, and hide part of themselves, as well as throw the whole back ground, into one impenetrable shade. Not a peep of the waters ever strike us, through the brakes of the woods, and the richest fields, are every where buried, among the hedges and trees that line them.

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The whole appears, till you plunge in the midst of them, an impassible thicket, and incessantly fills the mind with all those ideas of solitude and danger, so inseparable from the forests of uninhabited countries.

THOMSON never discloses a fine prospect, without exalting the spectator to an eminence sufficiently elevated for commanding and taking in the whole. Here we are not only charmed with the graceful disposition of parts, with that large and regular scale, with those masterly and majestic proportions, which nature observes in her most careless sketches; but the relative propriety, and local, as well as inherent beauties of the minutest thing, are distinctly recognized, if not sensibly felt.

THE *Seasons* abound in descriptions, where the objects which occupy the several scenes, are specifically enumerated; not separately, as in a state of disjunction, but as possessing certain relative connections, as partly dependant on each other, as constituent particulars of one whole; as contributing their respective shares, in producing the general effect.

WITH what masterly minuteness does he paint the vernal shower, and distinguish the genial rains of spring, from the cheerless and plashy floods of winter.

The

The north-east spends his rage ; he now shut up  
Within his iron cave, th' effusive south  
Warms the wide air, and o'er the void of heaven  
Breathes the big clouds with vernal showers distent.  
At first a dusky wreath they seem to rise,  
Scarce staining either ; but by swift degrees,  
In heaps on heaps, the doubling vapour sails  
Along the loaded sky, and mingling deep  
Sits on th' horizon round a settled gloom :  
Not such as wintry-forms on mortals shed,  
Oppressing life ; but lovely, gentle, kind,  
And full of every hope and every joy,  
The wish of nature. Gradual sinks the breeze  
Into perfect calm ; that not a breath  
Is heard to quiver thro' the closing woods,  
Or rustling turn the many-twinkling leaves  
Of aspin tall. Th' uncurling floods, diffus'd  
In glassy breadth, seem thro' delusive lapse  
Forgetful of their course. 'Tis silence all,  
And pleasing expectation. Herds and flocks  
Drop the dry sprig, and mute-imploring eye  
The falling verdure. Hush'd in short suspense,  
The plummy people streak their wings with oil,  
To throw the lucid moisture trickling off ;  
And wait th' approaching sign to strike, at once,  
Into the general choir. Even mountains, vales,  
And forests seem, impatient, to demand  
The promised sweetness. Man superior walks  
Amid the glad creation, musing praise,  
And looking lively gratitude. At last,  
The clouds consign their treasures to the fields ;  
And, softly shaking on the dimpled pool

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Prelusive drops, let all their moisture flow,  
 In large effusion, o'er the freshened world.  
 The stealing shower is scarce to patter heard,  
 By such as wander thro' the forest walks,  
 Beneath the umbrageous multitude of leaves.  
 But who can hold the shade, while heaven descends  
 In universal bounty, shedding herbs,  
 And fruits, and flowers, on nature's ample lap?  
 Swift fancy fir'd anticipates their growth;  
 And, while the milky nutriment distils,  
 Beholds the kindling country colour round.

PERHAPS, the most striking and characteristic circumstance in this description, is the conscious hilarity of the human mind. For, after making you a spectator of all nature, in a state of wistful expectation for the reviving nutriment of heaven, he brings forth the Lord of this lower world, in that sort of majesty which best becomes him. The idea can never be too often repeated, and deserves the recollection and approbation of every generous and worthy mind.

——— Man superior walks  
 Amid the glad creation, musing praise  
 And looking lively gratitude.

HIS Summer in particular, is crowded with beautiful delineations of every rural kind. Cows milking, sheep shearing, hay making, are scenes which he describes at length, and with a striking exactness.

ness. No sight can be more natural than the herds and flocks, which he figures lolling on the bank of a stream, and panting under the noon-tide blaze. The lounging posture of their keeper, is thus beautifully specified :

—— Amid his subjects safe  
Slumbers the monarch swain, his careless arms  
Thrown round his head, on downy moss sustained ;  
Here, laid his scrip with wholesome viands fill'd,  
There list'ning every noise, his watchful dog.

THE harvest scene is also well deciphered. Here we find the reapers begin with the dawning day, their hardy toil, we see them all in motion; in four lines we learn the subject, the manner, and happy effects of their rustic conversation.

—— Through their cheerful band, the rural talk,  
The rural scandal, and the rural jest,  
Fly harmless, to deceive the tedious time,  
And steal unfelt, the sultry hours away.

THE master of the yielding field is pointed out by his task of distinction, his brooding mind, and his swelling heart. Nay, that nothing may be wanting to realize and finish the design, we are told,

The gleaners spread around, and here and there,  
Spike after spike, their scanty harvest pick.

NOTHING can be drawn more from nature than his approaches of winter. There is not a feature in the whole piece, which corresponds not with our feelings, on that dismal and dispiriting occasion. Then do we find yon sun sickening apace, and like expiring life resigning that system he once animated, to darkness and death. The following lines contain an assemblage of the blackest and most distressing images; and they strike us the more forcibly in description, that we know them to be so universally and sadly realised in life.

Meantime, in sable cincture, shadows vast,  
 Deep ting'd and damp, and congregated clouds,  
 And all the vapoury turbulence of heaven  
 Involve the face of things.

UNDER the stern dominion of this rigid and dreary season, all nature is contemplated as in a state of petrification or insensibility. It is added with a force and propriety, which the experience of every individual justifies.

The soul of man dies in him, loathing life,  
 And black with more than melancholy views.

S E C T. II.

THE justness of Thomson's descriptions has been greatly and universally admired. This was the last particular, under which we proposed to arrange our general remarks on the distinguishing characteristic of the *Seasons*; and which, we presume, may be called with some propriety, in the style of painting, *colouring from nature*.

There is, we all know, an obvious quality in bodies of every kind, by which the light in which we see them affect our organs of sight in such a manner as to produce sensations equally varied and distinct. This quality they derive, in common with all others, from that original and independent Being, who is himself the soul and beauty of every thing amiable in what he has made. What is universal nature, but the great and living organ, by which he operates on his creatures, by which he is known to them, and by which, in a peculiar manner, humanity is exalted into an immediate correspondence with Divinity.

THE platonic system of thinking, at least, teaches, that all kinds of beauty are congenial. Thus, for example, the peculiar loveliness of the feminine form, according to that philosophy, is but the mere exterior of internal excellence. To adopt a sentiment so much exploded and reprobated as  
this,

this, may now be thought laughable enough. Little minds have long been famous for making themselves merry, with what they do not understand. In every comparison of the sexes, an appeal is implicitly made to fact, and they are either strangely inattentive to the great master springs of active life, or know little of the world, who do not the Ladies the justice to own, that if, in some instances, we show the strongest heads, they uniformly discover the best hearts.\* Now, if the moral powers of

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\* I am aware, how extremely absurd this idea may appear to some sort of readers. Let it not be imagined, however, that I mean to compliment one sex at the expence of another. I believe it will be found, in general, that the human heart is nearly the same in both. But are not all our natural and best feelings, much more liable to be suppressed or supplanted by artificial ones, than theirs? I speak not to you, whose sole correspondence is with the most worthless and contemptible of all wretches.

——— Of God above, or man below,  
What can we reason, but from what we know.

Your judgment must be guided wholly by your own experience; though methinks it not a little hard, that those who owe their depravity and profligacy intirely to yours, should also be reproached by the authors of their ruin. The worst of beings can do nothing more, than torture and torment. Let others blame the  
miserable

the mind, affect the body more essentially and thoroughly than the speculative; and if theirs ope-

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miserable partners of your guilt as they will, the single reflection, that their first deviations from innocence must originate from you, ought certainly to inspire you with sentiments of tenderness and remorse, rather than with those of insolence and insult. But, ill as it does become you, whatever censures you are pleased to inflict on such as are reduced to the sad and shameful necessity of daily sacrificing their all at the shrine of public infamy, is it fair to involve the whole in one general, ungenerous and malignant opprobrium? Indeed your satire is the best eulogy they can receive. For my own part, I should think her virtue suspicious who shared your commendation. I am sure, it could not fail of putting every modest woman to the blush. Know, moreover, that you have no title either to think or speak on their subject. There is something about them, much too sacred, as well for the gross sensations of unprincipled hearts, as for the unhallowed sallies of intemperate tongues.

It is always a decisive mark of true worth, to be most liked by those, to whom, we are best known. Ye beloved few, who have long possessed every corner of my heart, continue to repay my attachment with equal affection and fidelity, and I forego, with all the apathy and good humour of a Stoick, the poor perishing pageantry of popular applause. What is the *whiffing of a name*, but the dull repetition of an echo, which dies on the memory as it does on the ear, and *leaves not a wreck behind*.

• All

rate, though, perhaps, with less vigour, yet with more regularity, sweetness and delicacy, on Plato's

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All ideas of character, not resulting from personal conviction, have a tendency to mislead. Ignorance and prejudice fabricate monsters. On a subject so delicate, experience alone can instruct with certainty. The best women, generally shew the least inclination to extend the circle of their acquaintance. Nor can we, any where else, learn what they are, for they are no where else known.

The charge of treachery so often exchanged between the sexes, falls on us, I am afraid, with much greater weight than it does on them. At least, they are not naturally perfidious. 'Tis art that makes them coquettes, and coquettes that makes them traitors. As sure as you find a woman choked with prudery and affectation, so sure is she destitute of all principle and worth. But I appeal to every person, who has the least regard for taste and decency, who has not lost all relish for the happiness that springs from the chaste sensibilities of an unpolluted heart, whether he has not suffered a thousand times more exquisitely, from the pitiful peevishness, and unrelenting antipathy of his own, than from any sickleness or levity he has found in the other sex? Indeed, the present situation of both, in this country at least, renders it impossible to be otherwise. The masculine character is peculiarly obnoxious to the petrifying influence of vulgar opinion. The young men of the age, are soon intoxicated with the fallacious maxims, either of the gay or the busy world. And  
both

hypothesis, their exterior, as we find it, must unavoidably be much more amiable and elegant than

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both extremes are equally pernicious to social excellence. Ideas of the most selfish and engrossing tendency, absorb their minds, at a very early period, and render them, ever after, criminally callous to the workings of humanity. With a strong predilection for wealth, independence or libertinism, they cheerfully prostitute all the powers of their minds, and all the feelings of their hearts, in acquiring one, or either, or all of these objects. This, unavoidably plunges them into all the machinations of pride, all the intrigues of gallantry, all the intricacies, toils and vicissitudes of business. From that moment, sentiment loses its weight, and sensibility its edge; interest triumphs in the absence of principle, and Nature relinquishes her dominion to Art.

The original principles and dispositions of the female mind, seldom undergo such a total revolution. Nor do women ever discover any great profligacy of heart, till they have forfeited all credit with the world. Apart from a few of the most perverse and unrelenting tempers, those of them, who are not flagrantly vicious, are seldom insincere. Their attachments, which constitute the most comfortable circumstance in domestic life, when innocent and undissembled, are much more lasting and fervent than ours. In short, as the world now goes, it is a thousand times more dangerous to trust a man than a woman of reputation.

I offer

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ours. Indeed, the most graceful of all attitudes and motions, are those, to which true delicacy, in feeling and thinking, give birth. Others, awkward and distorted as they are, and though, at best, but a species of the dullest mimicry, like glaring colours of every kind, may set the vulgar a gaping, because their minds are still rude and uninformed, and because their tastes have not acquired that fine edge, without which reality can but seldom be discriminated from mere semblance. Expressions of pure mind only reach the heart. Nor is the heart in a tone for recognizing these, with suitable affections, when either drenched in luxury, torpid in rusticity, or sunk in ceremony.

Through all the departments of society, only notice, how instantaneously and insensibly, tempers, impregnated with similar fires, select, distinguish and mingle with one another. A sudden impulse, like some magic charm, operates almost unconsciously, and cements their affections in a

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I offer no other apology for this long note, than that it refers to an instance of general depravity, which threatens the destruction of every thing for which a wise man could wish to live. For the present fashionable clamour, against the reality of female worth, which is a natural consequence of national effeminacy, is not more repugnant to the principles of the *finest taste*, than to those of the *purest morality*.

moment,

moment. By a certain mysterious sympathy, which sometimes commences and becomes mutual at first sight, they seem to read and explore one another's souls, and exchange, with secret satisfaction, the silent but inexpressible endearments of a heart-felt esteem. In such minds, how wonderfully strong, how amiably operative the powers and virtues of humanity? The many melting and querulous vibrations of distress, which mark the different stages of mortality, touch them more intensely than others; and they alone seem acquainted with that mute sort of language; in which, sentiment is so evidently superior, to all verbal utterance. Yes! the far-fetched heavings of an oppressed and overloaded heart, set theirs a bleeding at every pore. A mortified and dejected countenance, affects them more deeply than a thousand tongues. The mooping aspect, the long and wan visage, the eye that rolls inconsolable, and seems exhausted with weeping, the deepening sigh, the hesitating voice, the open mouth, the pale and trembling lips, the drooping head and pensive look, are to them more striking and tender, than all that words can express.

WHY are the descriptions of ancient, so vastly superior to those of modern poetry? Why, with all our boasted acquisitions of literature and science, do we still yield to these masters of the human heart, in Painting, Sculpture, Statuary, and every

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art that respects internal character, its influence on human affairs, and the whole machinery of life? One reason, among others, may be, that the popularity of this philosophy disposed them to deal more in tracing effects to their causes, than we do, and made the intricate workings of the mind and passions the sole object of their attention, and the great subject of their most interesting and elaborate delineations. And does not our late incomparable Actor, whom so many have seen with such inexpressible delight, owe most of his excellence and success, to that happy flexibility in his organs, by which we could trace the various movements of his mind, as minutely and distinctly as he felt them?

PARDON this intrusion, ye generous Lovers of Nature. May her fairest and sweetest forms be ever propitious to your hallowed haunts. But know ye not, that you tread on sacred ground? that all yon assemblage of colours, which float on your sight; and all yon dulcet sounds, which greet your ears, are material and visible signatures of an immaterial and invisible principle? Nay, what are all the various charms, of which you are so much and so justly enamoured, but pure emanations of Divinity? To him the human form owes all its delicacy, dignity, proportion and comeliness. He replenished our heads with ideas, and our hearts with sentiments. From him the Earth derives all her

her garniture and riches ; Nature all her beauteous perfections ; the Sun all his radiance and lustre ; and the Heavens all their splendour and magnificence ! Whatever, indeed, fills and ravishes the heart with extacy, is an obvious and striking feature of supreme goodness. And well can the contemplative and moralizing mind, trace the living and plastic energy of this sublime incomprehensible Being, through all the delicate and discriminating hues of sensitive, as well as through all the sympathies, sensibilities and attachments of animated and rational Nature.

HERE then is a key to that peculiar art of description, for which the genius of Thomson was so happily adapted. The multifarious phenomena of the year, struck him as so many different means, by which the great Father of the universe, promotes the happiness, and smiles benignant on the glad creation. With what propriety, for example, does he conclude his address to the Sun ! How elegant and natural the transition from that glorious luminary to the great Origin of light and life, of comfort and joy to all beings and all worlds ! We are lost in the pleasing but awful sublimity, to which we find our hearts exalted, by strains so consonant to the rational raptures of devotional minds.

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How shall I then attempt to sing of Him !  
 Who, Light Himself, in uncreated light  
 Invested deep, dwells awfully retir'd  
 From mortal eye, or angel's purer ken ;  
 Whose single smile has, from the first of time,  
 Fill'd, overflowing, all those lamps of Heaven,  
 That beam for ever thro' the boundless sky :  
 But, should he hide his face, th' astonish'd sun,  
 And all th' extinguish'd stars, would loos'ning reel  
 Wide from their spheres, and Chaos come again.  
 And yet was every faltering tongue of Man,  
 Almighty Father ! silent in thy praise ?  
 Thy Works themselves would raise a general voice,  
 Even in the depth of solitary woods  
 By human foot untrod ; proclaim thy power,  
 And to the quire celestial Thee resound,  
 Th' eternal cause, support, and end of all !

THUS, under the influence of a conviction, at once so affecting and sublime, he seizes, wherever his fancy roams, the identical circumstance, in all its variety of combinations, which strikes the deepest and pleases the most.

THE slightest strokes of Thomson's pencil, are accordingly discriminating and picturesque. This was the more difficult a task, that most of what he describes are the daily subjects of common observation. And no ordinary powers are requisite, to bestow such colouring, such dashes and charms on common objects, as shall render them attractive.

Yet his strictures are never vague, never trite, never

ver low. Familiar as many of his thoughts and ideas are to the bulk of his readers, what a wonderful air of novelty and grace tinctures and runs through almost every passage in his poem. He copied nothing but virgin Nature, and his copy is, throughout, a most faithful and exact one. The living original is always at hand, and he never wishes to be tried by any other test. He took the prospects he gives with his own eye, and happily realizes every thing he relates. His descriptions, therefore, not only please those of the chastest taste, but strangely affect and interest every good and feeling heart.

WITH what delicate and masterly strokes, does he frequently touch and discriminate, the various tints, which diversify and embellish the flowery lawn. How justly and nicely has he every where distinguished and traced the multiplied shades, which in the beauteous varnish, and chaste embroidery of Nature, runs so gradually and imperceptibly into one another. He seems particularly ambitious, on all occasions, to produce the same sensations in his readers, which the scenes he exhibits naturally do in their original state. This you must allow is a standard sufficiently decisive. For a similar effect can only take place by the influence of a similar cause. And in what situation, in what scene, does he not succeed, in this respect, to admiration. His *Winter* and *Spring*, for example,

are crouded with a train of the most pleasing images, but of a most opposite complexion and tendency, glow so intensely with the peculiar characteristics and colouring of each; that in reading the one, the mind is tinged with such a deep and sanguine melancholy, as nothing can relieve her from so readily and effectually, perhaps, as a frequent and feeling perusal of the other.

WE shall have occasion, as we proceed, to observe more fully, with what attention to this circumstance he manages every part of his subject. Examples of his breathing, as it were, the very language, and assuming the very form of nature, are innumerable. How many of his objects and scenes, appear as shaggy and bleak, as grotesque and rugged, as the wildest and most romantic imagination could wish. These however, he purposely selects and accommodates, chiefly as contrasts, to heighten the pleasure which arises from more amiable and engaging prospects. And with what an easy and graceful felicity, has he every where caught the intermingling hues, which dance in such a pleasing and picturesque variety on the ravished eye; with what a fine collection of the sweetest colours, diversified every landscape he delineates; with what significant and apposite epithets, marked the fragrant effluvia which perfume the air, wherever the odoriferous tribes abound.

NOR

NOR is it straining the metaphor unreasonably, to observe, that the same exquisite colouring which prevails in his natural, distinguishes also his moral painting. And in the one, he is just as great a master, as in the other. His reflections, which the subject always suggests, are only proposed in the language of friendship, not announced with an air of authority. He never uses the didactic style, never runs into the garulity of the pulpit, never preaches, never deals in satire, never discovers either a rigid mind, or a narrow heart. Intimately acquainted with human nature, and the numberless sensations we recognize, in almost every circumstance, the very tone of his sentiments, and the structure of his thoughts, generally set the minds of his readers a moralizing. So that in every solitary track through which he leads us, we are somehow disposed to expect some useful or affecting hint before we leave it; and are seldom or never disappointed.

No artist ever executed well, who was not previously sensible of the difficulties he had to encounter. The human mind never appears so truly great and independant, never discovers her innate majesty and might so fully, as when grappling with extremity. Indispensable necessity alone, rouses imagination, and prompts her to put forth all her strength. On such occasions she generally reaches a sublimity, to which, in no other circumstance she

is equal. How tenderly and emphatically does our poet deplore, his utter inability to rival the finely variegated drapery of Nature! He, nevertheless, attempts it with unexampled and unexpected success. Genius often takes her expansion and spirit, from the vastness or boldness of the enterprise, in which she engages; and like the steed in the chace, kindles as she proceeds. To the idea therefore which he conceived of the all perfect original, Thomson's most finished descriptions, may well be attributed, and that idea is strongly and elegantly expressed in the following lines:

—— But who can paint

Like nature? Can imagination boast,  
Amid its gay creation, hues like hers?  
Or can it mix them, with that matchless skill,  
And lose them in each other, as appears  
In ev'ry bud that blows? If fancy then  
Unequal fails beneath the pleasing task,  
Ah! what can language do?

C H A P.

C H A P. IV.

*Objections to the Seasons, considered.*

*Number and rhyme and that harmonious sound,  
Which not the nicest ear with harshness wound,  
Are necessary, yet but vulgar arts;  
And all in vain these superficial parts  
Contribute to the structure of the whole,  
Without a Genius too; for that's the soul.*

**I**MPARTIALITY is the best, and most indispensable qualification of a good Critic. His task is by much the most delicate in the whole range of literature, and candour is not less essential, than capacity, to render him, in all respects, what Pope would have him to be.

Still pleas'd to praise, yet not afraid to blame!

WITHOUT what may be called a classical firmness of discrimination, his censures are at most but the rash decisions of prejudice, and his encomiums, no more than the blind apotheosis of ignorance. I have already disclaimed all pretensions to this illustrious and important character; and profess to be guided in these remarks, by no other standard, than the simple undisguised feelings of my

own

own heart. A few things, however, in the *Seasons*, which have been often and severely taxed with impropriety, deserve some attention.

It has been repeatedly observed, and cannot be too frequently recollected, that a certain degree of imperfection, tarnishes every human excellence. Man, is born with an ambition, that subjects him to perpetual mortification. Some distant object, whether real, or imaginary, is still pushing us onward to new acquisitions; which, however, never take effect, without producing new blunders. For this is not the state of pure unblemished exertion; but like the age of infancy, an age of probation, in which, all the merit results from the effort, none from the execution. The desire of improvement, is never without some share of success, and hopes of doing better; when attended with correspondent endeavours, are seldom disappointed. And the faults which unavoidably mark all such generous attempts, frequently suggest their own apology. Indeed, Modesty, the inseparable handmaid of *Genius*, may also be considered, as a veil, destined by nature to shroud her blemishes.

THE only confidence of unassuming merit, is a certain predilection of the human heart, of which, it is in constant and full possession. This never fails to secure it a fair hearing, and give due weight to whatever can be alledged in its favour. It is the natural counterpart of Fame, and both instinctively recognize

recognize each other. But, what we are much more disposed to chastise and suppress, is the temerity of self-conceit; the dull, but dazzling effrontry of Folly, in the garb of Wisdom, and the noisy impudence of Ignorance, in the clamorous and aspiring tone of Affectation. True superiority indicates nothing insolent or overbearing, flounces not in the hollow gait of ostentation, borrows not the semblance of dignity, from the sneers of contempt; hides not littleness of mind under a lofty temper, is never seen stalking on stilts; never gratified in crushing a rival. There is not, perhaps, a more complete and ludicrous contrast in nature, than a consciousness of worth on the one hand, and the saucy and blustering pretensions of Vanity on the other. It generally puts me in mind, of the mild and majestic brow of heaven, which retains eternal unruffled serenity, while the inextinguishable fury of conflicting elements, distract the regions below.

MANKIND are still very indulgent to the claims of Genius. An obvious desire to please, and the honest efforts, however weak, of a laudable intention, are seldom treated with severity. Feelings of real diffidence, are not easily counterfeited, nor ever discovered, without disarming our resentment. These amiable dispositions operate some how in the literary, as sentiments of contrition do in the moral world: they soften that asperity, which blunders  
so

so naturally occasion, and unless in a few, whose hearts are blasted with implacability, change a propensity to censure, into that of sympathy and forgiveness.

THE universal popularity of the *Seasons*, is a better proof of their intrinsic merit, than all the criticisms in the world can be to the contrary. This charming poem, so uniformly rural and enchanting, is equally read in town and country, by the oldest not less than the youngest. Those who have no taste, as well as those who have the most polished ones, are yet confessedly susceptible of the pleasures it affords. I have found it in the hands of Shepherds, in the remotest solitudes, who never saw another book, save their Bible; and heard some of its finest passages repeated by Clowns who had no motive for getting it by heart, but that of its delineating so well, many scenes and circumstances, in which, they are necessarily and deeply interested. Yet, this great and general suffrage, has been no sufficient protection against the cruel inroads and ravages of criticism. Would it not seem as if some capricious spirit had established it, as an unalterable maxim in society, that nothing should afford entertainment to all, without being obnoxious to the pitiful refinements and sarcasms of a few.

I. THE versifications of the *Seasons*, has been greatly blamed for want of harmony. *Harshness*,  
is

is undoubtedly one of the most unpardonable defects in poetical language. Even prose can hardly be too musical. For this reason, every good writer is peculiarly attentive, not only to the choice and arrangement of his words, but also, and chiefly, to the form, the structure, and symmetry of his periods. He knows, and feels the importance of flattering the senses, in order to possess the heart. A chaste ear, is as easily hurt as a tender eye; and rugged sounds, produce nearly the same sensations as rugged objects. There is not a single sentence, perhaps, in all the Rev. Dr. Robertson's writings, which might not be set to music. We read them, with the same calm and placid emotions, which rise in our minds on hearing a regular tune. His eloquence, like the beautiful course, of some fair majestic river, rolls every where along with such equal and unparalleled dignity, that, a part from the chaste philosophical spirit he breathes, the political sagacity he discovers, and the fine vein of morality he inculcates, the superior elegance of his style alone, intitles him to no vulgar applause. Swift, who studied only how to express himself with most perspicuity, strength, and correctness; is, notwithstanding, a manifest contempt for measured prose, one of the best prose Writers we have. And, no man discovers a finer ear in versifying than he does. I am apt to believe, that the extreme neatness which reigns through all the productions of  
Pope,

Pope, might not be a little influenced, by the very delicate severity of the Dean's taste. For his uncommon classical purity, like a vein of rich ore, which tinges wherever it flows, though less or more possessed by all his congenial friends, seems chiefly to have originated from him. He had a manliness about him, that detected effeminacy and affectation in all the shapes they put on; and rejected, with firmness, their most insinuating approaches. In uttering his ideas, he spake in a tone of indifference, that shewed how little he valued the plaudit of his hearers; and, more to indulge his own humour, than gratify that of the public; he sung his song with a melody as sweet, a sprightliness as natural, and a mind as independant of vulgar suffrage, as the nightingale among the shades of evening; the thrush, among the thickets of the forest; and the sky-lark, among the clouds of heaven——Thus, harmony, however dispensible in prose, is a material and capital ingredient in measured poetry. Indeed, as the whole train of thought and sentiment may be as much, the Inspiration of the Muses without, as with their language, Harmony seems an essential characteristic of poetical expression. In this charming quality of style, all emphatical sounds are so happily varied, as to prevent every kind of monotony, and follow each other by a gradual swell, in one pure succession of the sweetest and richest modulation. For this reason,

reason, transitions in the sense, as well as sound, are managed with the softest and nicest elegance; the rules of number and quantity observed with inviolable fidelity, and every accent disposed, according to the most exquisite exactness and delicacy. The position of the pauses, is susceptible of much variation, and one of the richest sources of poetical beauty. Dryden's inimitable *Ode on the Power of Music*, owes much of its excellence to this particular circumstance. The measure is perpetually changing with the subject, and the changes in both, are as soft as they are sudden, and as easy as unexpected. Milton was the first who introduced blank verse into regular poetry, and has succeeded so well, as to keep all his numerous tribe of servile imitators, at a very mortifying distance. He is certainly the greatest master of harmonious numbers, that ever the English language produced, as well as possessed of the sublimest imagination that ever felt the raptures of poetical enthusiasm. His manner has been often assumed, or rather, independent of rhyme, set an example of such lofty and musical versification, as gave a new turn to poetical taste. Addison's papers on *Paradise Lost*, awakened the national attention to its melody, and made a general and strong impression in its favour. Hence many poets of that age, and some with considerable success, threw aside the insipid jingle of rhyme, and adopted the Miltonian measure. Thomson was  
one,

one, and not the least happy of the number. His *Castle of Indolence*, however, with a few other metrical pieces, is evidence sufficient, how well he might have succeeded in another dress. But, he probably preferred *blank verse*, because of the copious range it gives to fancy. What a pity, it may be said, that he did not turn his periods with a little more delicacy. For my own part, I should not have liked them the worse, though he had. But, who can help observing, that this complaint, with a thousand others, has originated solely from critics. The sentiments and ideas of the poet, take such full possession of our minds and affections, that we instantly loose sight of his manner. At least, I never in my life, heard any one tax him, with want of harmony, whose heart was not then in a tone of refinement, that rendered them totally incapable of any other feeling. The truth is, he uniformly writes from a full heart, and in that temper could hardly be supposed sufficiently attentive on all occasions, to the smoothness of his verse. Shakespeare himself, composed in a similar, though superior tone of sensibility, and his numbers are liable to a similar objection. Perhaps, it will be found on enquiry, that Milton is not always most harmonious, when most tender. It would, however, be a dangerous innovation in criticism, to fix it as a maxim, that pathetic sentiments are incompatible with the most melodious numbers. And yet

yet it does strike me very strongly, though I cannot but mention it with the utmost diffidence, that the poet, who writes only from imagination, has a much better chance to excel in the art of chastising and finishing his language, than he, whose heart is solely engaged in the business. After all, what though we allow, that Thomson's taste in this respect, is not the most conspicuous part of his merit, and that his verse, on the whole, is not so finely and uniformly sonorous as that of Milton. Suppose his accents are frequently misplaced, that his syllables do not always run into one another with due poetical ease and gentleness, and that his vowels and consonants are seldom happily enough mingled, to mellow and modify the sound. Is it not a good deal for him, that he is so uniformly strong, expressive, and pointed? For though he should want melody, as he often does, he never wants nerves. He appears to have wrote, with the same vigour, in which he thought. The object he exhibits struck him forcibly, and the impression loses nothing of its energy, from his method of expression. Perhaps, he imagined, that the roughness of our language could not be impaired, without impairing its strength, or more probably, that extreme smoothness was by no means essential to good poetry. Indeed, if we may judge of his taste, from his habits in life, he was not over fond of fastidious polishing. For with the gentlest heart in

the world, his exterior was characteristically blunt and awkward. By all accounts, he was of too open a temper, to adopt the disguises of fashion, too manly to relax into all the extravagance of mental refinement, and too rigidly honest, not to be homely and plain. The feature most prominent in life, is uniformly the most striking in all original productions. The *Seasons*, is more than any other poem extant, the picture of a pure mind, in unison with a fund of the sweetest sensibility, of a masterly understanding, in conjunction with a most benevolent heart; of the strongest poetical powers, under the sanction and management of dispositions inflexibly virtuous.

II. WANT of simplicity, has also been imputed to the Author of the *Seasons*. Imagination is never in less danger of disappointment, than in hunting after blemishes in the precincts of humanity. All our acquisitions begin and end with simplicity. This is the point whence we set out, and in which the highest perfection we reach in art, necessarily terminates. Acquired, are early substituted for natural habits, and it is not without the utmost severity of discipline; and till a very long time has expired, if ever, that we are able to unite them. But this union, whenever, and wherever, it does take place, infallibly produces simplicity. The most obvious things, are not always the most easily defined. It

is impossible, perhaps, to communicate my precise idea of simplicity, to the Reader, as he might probably find some difficulty, in communicating his to me. This much however, is certain, that affectation is the opposite of simplicity; and uniformly shocking, unless, when combined with an assemblage of agreeable circumstances; we find it sometimes among the foibles of the young and the fair. As for an old Fop, it is undoubtedly one of the most nauseous things in existence. The hoary head, is a natural and significant emblem of dignity and wisdom. No assurance, but that of conscious and acknowledged virtue and generosity, sits gracefully on years and experience. To compare great things with small; the sun going down among the putrid clouds, which load and pollute our atmosphere, is no improper representation, to one in the neighbourhood of London, of declining life, choaked with the fumes of imaginary consequence, and trembling on the verge of mortality, amidst the ludicrous intoxications of vanity. Yet, who has not had the misfortune of sometimes seeing one of these antique *petit maitres*, dealing out with much unmeaning stateliness and solemnity; all his stock of folly, flattery, and complaisance; and even full of the most tiresome attentions to those, whom notwithstanding he probably regarded in his heart with contempt. Surely, every species of hypocrisy, is affectation in extreme; and he must be an original indeed, who with a ceremony,

mony, that is a perfect burlesque on every thing elegant and genteel, is yet, not destitute either of taste or talents. In writing, as well as in life, want of real worth is not easily concealed, and what no artificial embellishment can supply. Unluckily however, the latter generally prevails most, in the absence of the former. For the bombast of dulness, and the exuberance of genius, are essentially and palpably distinct. Perhaps, Waller, Gay, Parnel, and Goldsmith, have more simplicity in their versification, than most English poets. But this quality, beautiful and charming as it is, we seldom find in conjunction with uncommon richness of sentiment, or great ardour of thinking. It evaporates on the least appearance of effort, and is always found in union with a taste highly polished, but rarely with a genius originally strong. I have no objection, though Shakespeare should be produced as an exception to this remark. The heart is not more capricious in its attachments, than taste sometimes in its decisions; and there are not wanting, who think him one of the greatest masters of simplicity in the English language. But while he reigns supreme in the higher departments of his art, no inferior species of excellence can be of the least consequence to his fame. And whatever my taste may suffer from the declaration, I must be of opinion, that Thomson often rivals him with success, in the simplicity of his descriptions. I submit

mit it to better judges, whether the following passages, which are among the first that accrued to me, do not breathe as much simplicity, as a proper conciseness of language, and the necessary closeness of ideas could well permit? The first, refers to the various and amiable sensations which fill the contemplative mind, as she looks wistfully around her on the fall of the year.

Ten thousand thousand fleet ideas, such  
As never mingled with the vulgar dream,  
Croud fast into the mind's creative eye.  
As fast the correspondent passions rise,  
As varied, and as high : Devotion rais'd  
To rapture, and divine astonishment ;  
The love of nature unconfin'd, and, chief,  
Of human race ; the large ambitious wish,  
To make them blest ; the sigh for suffering worth  
Lost in obscurity ; the noble scorn  
Of tyrant-pride ; the fearless great resolve ;  
The wonder which the dying patriot draws,  
Inspiring glory thro' remotest time ;  
Th' awakened throb for virtue, and for fame ;  
The sympathies of love, and friendship dear ;  
With all the social Offspring of the heart.

THE next is taken from his account of solitude, which he has so justly celebrated, as greatly preferable to the most splendid accomodations of fashionable life. He possessed a fund of entertainment in his own mind, which he thought but ill exchanged,

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for all the tumultuous rotations of gaiety and madness in the world. And the blessings he enumerates, are of all others, the most likely, to confer a considerable share of comfort, if not felicity, on the present condition of humanity.

Here too dwells simple truth ; plain innocence ;  
Unfollied beauty ; sound unbroken youth,  
Patient of labour, with a little pleas'd ;  
Health ever blooming ; unambitious toil ;  
Calm contemplation, and poetic ease.

THE last instance of his simplicity: I shall now produce, is his character of Milton. It is taken from a copious apostrophe to Britain, in which the poet, in a rich profusion of characteristic colouring, paints those of her sons, who have most distinguished themselves, in science, arts, and arms. He is so happy in the modification of his ideas, and the precision of his terms, that even figurative language is here of advantage to simplicity. This, is one of the few examples, either in poetry or prose, in which comparisons give a justness and perspicuity to style, of which the most apposite, natural diction is utterly incapable.

Is not each great, each amiable muse  
Of classic ages, in thy Milton met ?  
A genius universal as his Theme,  
Astonishing as Chaos, as the bloom  
Of blowing Eden fair, as Heaven sublime !

BUT

BUT original minds only, are capable of knowing when it is proper to sacrifice inferior, to superior excellence. Perhaps, an exchange of this kind may be necessary, in no species of poetry, so often as in that of the descriptive. And then, none but he who wished more to amuse the fancy, than to interest and improve the heart; would substitute soft and flowery, for strong and ardent conceptions of the truth. Few are acquainted with the various avenues of science. Genius is often struck with innumerable associations and veins of connection, which are altogether imperceptible to others. And style is constantly and deeply tinged, with such impressions, as these infallibly stamp on imagination. Thus, Pope has unwarily involved the Genius and the Dunces, in the same indiscriminate censure.

Poets like painters thus unskill'd to trace,  
The naked nature, and the living grace,  
With gold and jewels cover ev'ry part,  
And hide with ornaments their want of art.

THE late Dr. Goldsmith has oftener than once, affected to speak of Thomson in terms very disrespectful. But, that gentleman's taste of poetry was much too fastidious to become a standard. All the pieces he has left as specimens of his own, are so extremely laboured, that their chief merit lies in

simplicity of versification. The famous *Elegy* written in a *Country Churchyard*, did not escape his invidious sarcasms. The truth is, a very strange and silly affectation, modified his opinions of men, manners, and things. I have it from the most respectable authority, that he even preferred Beaumont and Fletcher, to Shakespeare. So that his censure, especially, as opposed to publick and prevailing approbation, does our poet, on the whole, no great discredit.

WHOEVER knows any thing about the nature and texture of composition, must be sensible, how much the chasteness and spirit of it, depends on a delicate choice of epithets. I will not deny, that many of Thomson's luxuriancies, seem to have stood in need of some pruning. And yet, I must declare, very few of them strike me, as intirely superfluous. Ideas never come into the mind alone. They have all their circumstances and sentiments, which like the accompaniments of music, are inseparable from their being. To exhibit our conceptions justly, these must have a share in our expression. Thus, the diffuseness of our Author, is never without a meaning. Even his verbosity is often significant, and sometimes beautiful. He has indeed, been frequently charged with an improper selection of Epithets, but, I presume, not always with sufficient candour.

dour. Epithets, are in writing, what colours are in painting, they distinguish, ascertain, and give identity to the object. The style of common Writers, is calculated some how to give no precise conception of what they would say. They seldom lose sight of the subject indeed, but still you perceive it only at a distance. This makes it strike them as inexhaustible, and produces all that tedious and dull prolixity, which renders their best performances, so flimsy, unaffecting, and insipid, to men of taste. Imagination figures nothing, the understanding conceives nothing, the heart feels nothing, which to *Genius* has not a particular and peculiar aspect. And, a good Writer, studies only to present his Readers with a faithful copy of his own images. In my opinion, Thomson does this with singular dexterity. He is even happy enough on many occasions, to fix the attention on some new idea, merely by an unexpected felicity in the application of some new term. These, however vague, at first sight, when minutely considered, generally discover a richness and apposition quite uncommon, as well as express some very characteristic, though latent quality of the object to which they refer. Thus, for example, and it is the only one I shall specify, the *rosy fingered hours*, and *light footed deities*, may seem quaint to minds not finely susceptible of the softer charms of nature, but when we take into consideration the temporary and perishing

duration of the most delicate vegetables, together with those sweet but evanescent perfumes, which they shed around them; the image is not less particular and discriminating, than elegant and poetical.

III. *THE Seasons*, it has likewise been said, are tinged in many places with obscurity. This, is a charge sufficiently weighty, at least, to rouse attention. For, what is the art of writing, good for, if after all our attempts to be explicit, our ideas continue still unknown to one another. Intelligence, is the first object, and perspicuity, undoubtedly, the most essential quality of language. All communications of mind, with mind, suppose a medium mutually understood. Whatever obscures that medium, is an obvious deduction from the pleasure or information, it was intended to convey. Irregular construction, improper terms, want of precision in the application of them, every species, indeed, of equivocation or ambiguity, is a degree of obscurity. And, the mode of expression is culpable, wherever the sense appears double, indeterminate, clouded, or perplexed. Thus, all instantaneous and coincident ideas, breaking in on a certain train of thought, and either supplanting it, by a temporary confusion of images, or producing an accidental abruptness of style, are extremely detrimental to perspicuity in writing. The least inattention

tion to philological minutiae, the chaste acceptation of words, the simple structure of language, and the whole system of grammatical purity, necessarily renders the meaning of an Author, much less obvious than otherwise it would be. Durst I hazard any opinion on a subject much too verbal not to be susceptible of the deepest acuteness, I should imagine, most of the obscurity we meet with in the *Seasons*, to arise from violent inversions of style, over-wrought descriptions, and a culpable use of technical phrases.

INVERSION of language, when managed with taste and delicacy, is the source of many striking beauties. But, it ought never to be forgotten, that these beauties, are wholly artificial, and never without a degree of impropriety, proportionable to that distortion from which they originate, and are inseparable. So that the least encroachments they make on the great laws of perspicuity, are doubly censurable. To shake the attention, and much more to suspend it, is a violation of ease and nature, which no adventitious beauty whatever can sufficiently justify. I should not be much chagrined, however, to find the propriety of the following instances disputed. Dr. Goldsmith, has justly observed of Dryden's famous Ode,\* which has no

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\* See the *Beauties of English poetry*, selected by Dr. Goldsmith. This little compilation of Poems, the Editor boldly

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parallel for simplicity of expression, majesty of thought, and harmony of numbers, in the English language; *that it gives its beauties rather at a third or fourth, than at a first perusal.*

I. The rapid radiance instantaneous strikes  
Th' illumin'd mountain, thro' the forest streams,  
Shakes on the floods, and in a yellow mist,  
Far smoaking o'er th' interminable plain,  
In twinkling myriads lights the dewy gems.  
Moist, bright, and green, the landscape laughs around.  
Full swell the woods; their very music wakes,  
Mix'd in wild concert, with the warbling brooks-  
Increas'd, the distant bleatings of the hills,  
And hollow lows responsive from the vales,  
Whence blending all the sweetened zephyr springs,  
Mean time refracted from yon eastern cloud,  
Bestriding earth, the grand ethereal bow  
Shoots up immense; and every hue unfolds,  
In fair proportion running from the red,

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boldly pronounces, the best of the kind. In the preface, he declares, that none are admitted which do not possess a beginning, a middle, and an end. It often happens, however, that men of the greatest discernment, have not always the best memories. For, in the short character prefixed to the *Alma of Prior*, he bluntly protests, that he does not know what the Poet would be at. It does not require much wit, to add, that the criticism is at least, as trifling as the poem, and much more petulant.

To

To where the violet fades into the sky.  
Here, awful Newton, the dissolving clouds  
Form, fronting on the sun, thy showry prism ;  
And to the sage-instructed eye unfold  
The various twine of light, by thee disclos'd  
From the white mingling maze. Not so the boy ;  
He wondering views the bright enchantment bend,  
Delightful, o'er the radiant fields, and runs  
To catch the falling glory ; but amaz'd  
Beholds th' amusive arch before him fly,  
Then vanish quite away. Still night succeeds,  
A softened shade, and saturated earth  
Awaits the morning-beam, to give to light,  
Rais'd thro' ten thousand different plastic tubes,  
The balmy treasures of the former day.

II.———Breath'd hot,  
From all the boundless furnace of the sky,  
And the wide glittering waste of burning sand,  
A suffocating wind the pilgrim smites  
With instant death. Patient of thirst and toil,  
Son of the desert ! even the camel feels,  
Shot thro' his wither'd heart, the fiery blast.  
Or from the black-red ether, bursting broad,  
Sallies the sudden whirlwind. Strait the sands  
Commov'd around, in gathering eddies play :  
Nearer and nearer still they darkening come ;  
Till, with the general all-involving storm  
Swept up, the whole continuous wilds arise ;  
And by their noon-day fount dejected thrown,  
Or sunk at night in sad disastrous sleep,  
Beneath descending hills, the caravan  
Is buried deep———

———Whate'er

III. ——— Whate'er the wintry frost  
 Nitrous prepar'd; the various-blossom'd spring  
 Put in white proinise forth; and summer suns  
 Concocted strong, rush boundless now to view,  
 Full, perfect all; and swell my glorious theme.

OBSCURITY, is often inseparable from elaborate writing. In struggling hard for a full description, it is sometimes impossible to avoid perplexity. This often produces a swell in the style, which insensibly drowns the sense. One would imagine, some Authors wrote on purpose that they might not be understood, and that others fell into the same snare, merely by too much solicitude in avoiding it. When the subject rushes on their minds, they seem as if they were in haste to deliver themselves of the impressions it makes, and multiply expressions in accumulating every circumstance, that the picture may be exhibited intire. Then, it is chiefly, that Thomson, at least, unconsciously works himself up into the turgid and obscure. I shall only produce two instances, in which the leading idea is almost buried among a multitude of accessory ones, and where, for me at least, he is much too profound, to be plain.

THE first, is, where he accounts for the origin of thunder and lightning. In enumerating the causes which produce this alarming combination of hostile elements, he dives into the deepest recesses of philosophy.

lesophy. Such investigations are peculiarly apposite to his plan, and he never avoids them. The acuteness of his understanding is uniformly equal to the boldness of his fancy. And, he seldom mentions any striking phenomena, without suggesting some scientific hint, not less original, than the many beautiful strokes of poetry with which it is generally connected.

Behold, flow-settling o'er the lurid grove  
Unusual darkness broods; and growing gains  
The full possession of the sky, furcharg'd  
With wrathful vapour, from the secret beds,  
Where sleep the mineral generations, drawn.  
Thence nitre, sulphur, and the fiery spume  
Of fat bitumen, steaming on the day,  
With various-tinctur'd trains of latent flame,  
Pollute the sky, and in yon baleful cloud,  
A reddening gloom, a magazine of fate,  
Ferment; till, by the touch ethereal rous'd,  
The dash of clouds, or irritating war  
Of fighting winds, while all is calm below,  
They furious spring.—

THE other, is, his description of frost; which, in his manner, is equally masterly and expressive, has no other fault indeed, but that it requires rather too much attention, either to comprehend its meaning, or relish its beauties. The whole account however, is not less natural, than significant. And the

the original is too well known, not to interest us in the image. There is something wonderfully picturesque and poetical in the idea,——of the *frost* arresting the bickering stream,——the imprisoned river growling below,——the frozen earth ringing loud,——the distant waterfalls swelling the breeze,——the pale unjoyous eye of morn,——the pendant icicles,——the fancied figures of the frostwork,——and the Shepherds swift descent on the slippery surface. These are beauties, which perhaps shine the brighter, and strike the more forcibly, for being seen through a dusky medium.

What art thou, frost? and whence are thy keen stores  
 Deriv'd, thou secret all-invading power,  
 Whom even th' illusive fluid cannot fly?  
 Is not thy potent energy, unseen,  
 Myriads of little salts, or hook'd, or shap'd  
 Like double wedges, and diffus'd immense  
 Thro' water, earth, and ether? Hence at eve,  
 Steam'd eager from the red horizon round,  
 With the fierce rage of winter deep suffus'd,  
 An icy gale, oft shifting, o'er the pool  
 Breathes a blue film, and in its mid career  
 Arrests the bickering stream. The loosened ice,  
 Let down the flood, and half dissolv'd by day,  
 Rustles no more; but to the sedgy bank  
 Fast grows, or gathers round the pointed stone,  
 A crystal pavement, by the breath of heaven  
 Cemented firm; till, seiz'd from shore to shore,  
 The whole imprison'd river growls below.

Loud

Loud rings the frozen earth, and hard reflects;  
A double noise ; while, at his evening watch,  
The village dog deters the nightly thief ;  
The heifer lows ; the distant water-fall  
Swells in the breeze ; and, with the hasty tread  
Of traveller, the hollow sounding plain  
Shakes from afar. The full ethereal round,  
Infinite worlds disclosing to the view,  
Shines out intensely keen ; and, all one cope  
Of starry glitter, glows from pole to pole.  
From pole to pole the rigid influence falls,  
Thro' the still night, incessant, heavy, strong,  
And seizes nature fast. It freezes on ;  
Till morn, late-rising o'er the drooping world,  
Lifts her pale eye unjoyous. Then appears  
The various labour of the silent night :  
Prone from the dripping eave, and dumb cascade,  
Whose idle torrents only seem to roar,  
The pendant icicle ; the frost-work fair,  
Where transient hues, and fancied figures rise ;  
Wide-spouted o'er the hill, the frozen brook,  
A livid tract, cold-gleaming on the morn ;  
The forest bent beneath the plummy wave ;  
And by the frost refin'd the whiter snow,  
Incrusted hard, and sounding to the tread  
Of early shepherd, as he pensive seeks  
His pining flock, or from the mounting top,  
Pleas'd with the slippery surface, swift descends.

BUT, what contributes most of all, to give the  
*Seasons* an air of obscurity, is an incautious use of  
technical terms. For, poetry is never so amiable,

as when she brings light out of darkness, or so un-  
 seemly, as when she disguises the objects she would  
 exhibit. But men of science are extremely apt to  
 presume too far on that of their Readers. Among  
 an enlightened people, every separate branch of  
 knowledge is couched under a peculiar phraseology  
 of its own. And, a barbarous creation of systems,  
 renders this artificial jargon so indispensable to the  
 regular acquisition of science, that there is no at-  
 taining the one, without studying the other. The  
 votaries of arts and sciences, however, should not  
 blab their secrets on every ear, or obtrude a lan-  
 guage peculiar only to certain connoisseurs, indis-  
 criminate on all. It is considered in almost every  
 polished country, as an insult on the natives; for,  
 foreigners to retain inflexibly the modes and fash-  
 ions of their own. Stubborn habits are ill to bend:  
 but, when a reduction of them may be attended  
 with convenience to others, there is at least some  
 merit in the attempt. Literature of all kinds be-  
 comes pedantry only, when unseasonably displayed.  
 Thomson's introduction to the separate parts of his  
 poem, is uniformly chargeable with this defect.  
 By substituting an astronomical, in the room of a  
 poetical account of the annual revolution of the  
*Seasons*, we find the various Signs of the Zodiack  
 wriggling into verse. Indeed, had he meant to  
 turn the sweet approaches of *Spring* into ridicule,  
 he could hardly have done it more effectually than  
 in these lines.

At

At last, from *Aries* rolls the bounteous sun,  
And the bright *Bull* receives him——

Who but an adept in the Science of Astronomy, can be supposed to know, that *twins*, is the name of a certain *hieroglyphic*, the third in order of those which mark the annual track of the Sun through the heavens; that *Cancer* is the Sign of the summer solstice, or that point in the solar elliptic where the Sun enters in June. What precise meaning then can the bulk of Readers, affix to this couple of verses.

When now no more th' alternate *Twins* are fir'd  
And *Cancer* reddens with the solar blaze.

*AUTUMN*, is not introduced one whit more gracefully. For, Readers only, who have been taught the use of the Globes, can sufficiently understand his description of the Sun's declension, when in the fall of the year he moves directly under the equinoctial, and makes our days and nights, precisely of an equal length.

When the bright *Virgin* gives the beauteous days,  
And *Libra* weighs in equal scales the year.

HE involves the coming on of Winter, in the same voluntary darkness. What a harsh collection

of unintelligible terms hurts the ear, at the same time that it mars the sense, in these two verses.

To *Capricorn*, the *Centaur Archer* yields,  
And fierce *Aquarius* stains th' inverted year.

How much more simple and beautiful, as well as perspicuous, is the stanza with which Akenfide begins an Ode, on the Winter solstice.

The radiant Ruler of the year,  
At length his wintry goal attains;  
Soon to reverse the long career,  
And northward bend his steady reins.

STILL however, it must be allowed, that Milton set the first inglorious example, of this glaring impropriety. In *Paradise Lost*, the vicissitudes of the Seasons, is only an accidental topic, and yet, he mentions almost every hypothesis that has been adopted by philosophers, to account for these phenomena. The splendour of excellence, for the most part, blinds us, to all its concomitant imperfections. With such a master constantly in his eye, it was almost impossible for Thomson to avoid the snare. The copy compared with the original is however extremely venial.

—Some say the sun  
Was bid turn reins, from the *equinoctial* road,

Like

Like distant breadth to *Taurus*, with the seven  
Atlantic sisters; and the Spartan *Twins*,  
Up to the *Tropic Crab*: thence down again  
By *Leo* and the *Virgin* and the *Scales*,  
As deep as *Capricorn*, to bring in change  
Of seasons to each clime.

EVEN Pope, whose chief characteristic is the most classical propriety, unfortunately mentions *Arcturus* and *Cancer*, in some very beautiful verses on angling and hunting. So that he is here, as at other times, not without a share in his own censure.

Such labour'd *nothings*, in so strange a style,  
Amaze th' unlearn'd, and make the learned smile.

IV. AN improper management of figurative language, is the last charge brought against the Author of the *Seasons* we shall mention. It would indeed be absurd, either to imagine, or alledge, that Thomson wrote better than any other Poet, but, that he has not wrote worse, and that his writings are only marked with such blemishes, as the best of them, have not been able wholly to avoid, are facts much in his favour. It is impossible perhaps, to fix precisely, the limits between literal and figurative language. We may as well attempt, in social and polished society, to trace the imperceptible shades, where nature ends, and art begins. In this respect, the more I think on the subject, the

more am I satisfied, that the refinements of criticism, however ingenuous, do very little service; perhaps some injury to the interest of polite learning. The native ardour and enthusiasm of genius, must be sensibly affected and diminished, by the endless and teasing distinctions which thus obtrude on her hallowed range. How few succeed in poetry, who begin with criticism. The path which leads to the Temple of the Muses, is steep indeed, but never rugged or perplexed; unless to those, who mistake illusions of vanity, for the voice of inspiration. It seems odd enough, but is remarkably true, that our greatest Poets, are generally least on their guard against petty blunders. In some minds there is a happiness however of this kind extremely beautiful, but the misfortune is, when it fixes the attention more on expression than thought. We may possess an elegance, to which the correctest taste can have no objection, but must bid farewell to that energy which reaches the heart, whenever we catch ourselves indifferent to the latter, and ingrossed by the former. Our ideas are often tinged by the objects that suggest them. We rarely find a style extremely polished, the vehicle of any thing solid and substantial. Good and bad Writers differ essentially and strangely, in working up their compositions. The former, are chiefly and solely desirous of giving their conceptions intire, as they rise in their own minds, with  
every

every collateral sentiment and circumstance that language can express, and apart from whatever the nicest precision can reject as heterogeneous. The latter, are so attentive to the choice and position of words, that the various connections and delicate association of things, are mostly, if not always overlooked. The mind, like the eye, seldom takes in her prospects with methodical exactness. In truth, our thoughts become systematical only when shackled by authority. And, there is a happy negligence in writing as in manners, which, in both, may be called the parent of dignity and grace. To a licentiousness so peculiarly descriptive of great minds, we owe almost every capital production that does honour to the human intellect. Is not the Iliad, in this respect, an everlasting monument of nature's superiority to art? Had Shakspeare foreseen what a formidable swarm of Editors, Critics, Commentators, and Vampers, were to fasten on his muse, his heart must have failed him on the first attempt. In the union of greatness and chasteness of correctness and spirit, Virgil, perhaps has no rival; but invention, in which he is singularly deficient, is fairly worth them both. No great industry, and I am sure very superficial parts, are sufficient to come under the Poet's description. But, who would appropriate the compliment, that wishes to avoid the sarcasm which concludes it.

But in such lays as neither ebb nor flow,  
Correctly cold, and regularly low,  
That shunning faults, one quiet tenor keep,  
We cannot blame indeed, but we may sleep.

This over-wrought purity of style however, supposes a thousand frivolous attentions, to which those only are equal, who can do nothing else; and cramp the spirit of composition, with a dry laborious precision, altogether incongruous to the generous and nervous effusions of liberal minds. But, supposing taste and genius incompatible, why should one be sacrificed, to the caprice of the other? Shall the fire of imagination be extinguished, by the chilling breath of fastidious accuracy? Since the united perfection of both is unattainable, is it not obvious, to which the preference is due? Perhaps, the declension of literature, may be dated, in every nation and age, from that precise period, when criticism became the fashionable study. Genius evaporates at the very first sight of this hydra-headed monster. I have known Rhetoricians possessed of genuine eloquence, and even Critics favoured by the Muses; but, instances of this kind are so rare, that the junction of talents thus dissimilar, must be unnatural. Did not oratory, in some sense, end with Tully's treatise on that subject in Rome; and poetry, with Aristotle's Poetics in Greece? Excellence is the offspring of enthusiasm, on some  
happy

happy moments may be hit in any thing, but can be taught in nothing. And, the vast multiplicity of rules, to which all kinds of writing are now reduced, startle those only from the attempt, who have the best and only chance of succeeding. For, who knows not, that indocility is the characteristic of dulness, and, that genius is still superior to all prescription. Though Thomson's metaphors are said to be forced, I will venture to affirm, that few poetical Readers are of that opinion. If we sit down to peruse a poem or work of genius, with a resolution to check every emotion of pleasure it produces, he must be blind indeed, who stumbles not on a thousand blunders. But, who that has a heart susceptible of genuine beauty, would not cheerfully forego such a *malignant dull delight*.—

*Showery radiance, moving softness, breezy coolness, flowing spring, dewy light, freshness breathes, and breathing prospect*, are some of the various metaphors for which our Author has been censured. And, if his Critics decide from their own feelings only, they may, for aught I know, be right. In every thing, we should judge from our own convictions, but we had need to be well informed, before we presume to prescribe. One who knew the limits of criticism well, suggests the following apology for the *Seasons*, and every species of fine poetry subjected to the same cavils,

Some

Some figures monstrous and mishap'd appear,  
 Consider'd singly or beheld too near,  
 Which, but proportion'd to their light or place,  
 Due distance reconciles to form and grace.

The Reader will here be pleased with a few observations from a late Author of reputation, who has left them behind him as a striking memorial against all word-catchers, and nibblers at genius. The amiable Dr. Gregory, in his *COMPARATIVE VIEW OF THE STATE AND FACULTIES OF MAN, WITH THOSE OF THE ANIMAL WORLD*: speaking of that astonishing association which attends imagination in all her excursions, subjoins this judicious and benevolent remark. The Poet's eye *as it glances from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven, is struck with numberless similitudes and analogies, that not only pass unnoticed by the rest of mankind, but cannot even be comprehended when suggested to them. There is a correspondence between certain external forms of nature, and certain affectations of the mind, that may be felt, but cannot always be explained. Sometimes the association maybe accidental, but it often seems to be innate. Hence the great difficulty of ascertaining the true sublime. It cannot, in truth, be confined within any bounds; it is entirely relative, depending on the warmth and liveliness of the imagination, and therefore different, in different countries. For the same reason, wherever there is great richness and profusion of imagery, which in some species of poetry is a great beauty; there are always very general*

*ral complaints of obscurity, which is increased by those sudden transitions that bewilder a common Reader, but are easily traced by a poetical one. An accurate scrutiny into the propriety of images and metaphors, is useless. If it be not felt at first, it can seldom be communicated; while we endeavour to analyse it, the impression vanishes.*

PERSONIFICATION and apostrophe, are congenial figures, and two of the boldest, and finest in poetry. Our Author, somewhat unfortunately; did not consult the canons of Criticism in his use of either; but, independent of all artificial decision, sung the chearful ditties of a grateful heart, just as Nature and the Muses inspired him. These modes of expression originate from a peculiar tone of mind, and like every other part of speech, are prior in existence to the rules that would regulate them. They were not purposely invented to beautify language, but suggested by necessity, and occasionally adopted to supply its defects. And, mankind in every state of society are found in possession of them, while totally unacquainted with theories, or systems, either of poetry or prose.

SIMPLE and direct terms, do not always express our sentiments and conceptions sufficiently. All ideas, suggested by a heated imagination, scorn the plain and usual medium of conveyance; and violent passions, like electrical bodies, sensibly affect whatever comes within the sphere of their velocity. When the heart swells with pleasure or pain, with  
extacy

extacy or perturbation, with placid, indignant, or sublime emotions, all operations of mind are unavoidably tinged with these feelings. Whatever the judgment thus dictates, the memory recalls, or the fancy feigns, is equally moulded and adjusted, by this great sympathetic law. Hence we *pause*, *personify*, and *apostrophize*, not to enrich our style, but solely to exhibit the real state of our minds; and, because no common language can do justice to such an impassioned sensibility. All moderation is at an end, whenever the heart breaks loose; and the sallies of Genius, under that predicament, are certainly intitled to every allowance, as ordinary minds are not competent judges of its ardour.

FIGURES of this kind, however, and which contribute most of all to the beauty and dignity of style, have their degrees, as well as the causes that produce them. Do we not often catch ourselves conferring sensibility and motion on inanimate objects unconsciously? We speak almost of every thing around us, and in a manner perfectly dispassionate, in the same elevated language, without running any risque of being misunderstood. But poetical imaginations, like the sun, diffuse peculiar energy and animation wherever they move, and liberally impart a share of their own feelings to whatever pleases them best, and attracts them most. From this striking singularity in the texture of superior minds, the descriptions of Thomson are all  
 alive,

alive, ardent, and glowing throughout. Every thing possessed his fancy, and seized the congenial affections of his heart, as endowed with sensible qualities. He animates the winds, the rains, the dews, the elements, and all the various phenomina of nature, with a lively and sentimental enthusiasm. His figuring the dismal *waste*, as listening to the wild notes of the *Plover*, for instance, is a stroke singularly happy and natural, and, which none but a genius highly poetical could have hit. The solemn stillness which often affect us, in such solitary and romantic situations, is what most probably suggested this fine idea. The abruptness with which he personifies the different *Seasons*, as they make their respective approaches, has not passed without censure. But this figure, so dear to rhetoricians, and degraded by pedantry, has somehow acquired too much imaginary dignity and importance forsooth, to be suitably introduced, till the mind has been formally prepared for its reception. It strikes me as an obvious and just reflection, that man is the same precise and finical being in all situations, and that the same mental peculiarity tinctures literature, which prevails in life. Our language at least, catches a certain starchness and formality, as soon as our manners degenerate from simplicity and nature. In both respects, truth and vigour are exchanged, for frippery and polish. I never perused a system of Rhetoric or Poetry, in

which all the various images and forms of speech are specifically classed, and have their different and peculiar places and functions assigned them, in my life, which did not also put me in mind of an Evening Entertainment or Ball, where the stiffest animal in the group generally presides, and adjusts with infinite consequence and ceremony, the rank and precedence of the Ladies; pairs the Beiles and the Beaux, according to équipage and inclination, leads up the Dance, and gives law to the whole temporary splendour, without hesitation, and without controul: Could we dispossess our minds of system but for a moment, we might soon be satisfied that all this parade, classical not less than social, is the mere offspring of art, in the formation and tendency of which, Nature has not the smallest concern. With what coolness are morning and evening, night and day, as well as the different seasons of the year, without any preparation whatever, and in common with a thousand other things; personified, by almost every Poet who has occasion to mention them. So that our Poet's introduction to *Summer*, instead of having *violently the air of writing mechanically and without taste,\** is with all due submission, to one of our best Critics, extremely natural and beautiful. That is, it strikes me as such.

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\* Elements of Criticism, vol. ii. page 248.

But let every one judge for themselves. Here it is.——

From bright'ning fields of æther fair disclos'd,  
Child of the sun, refulgent *Summer* comes.  
In pride of youth, and felt through nature's depth,  
He comes attended by the sultry hours,  
And ever-fanning breezes on his way ;  
While from his ardent look, the turning *Spring*  
Averts her bashful face, and earth, and skies,  
All smiling, to his hot dominion, leaves.

VISION, or apostrophe, is the imaginary presence of absent beings, and predominates in all its excess, in the intervals of reason; as in the case of dreaming or madness. Fancy, for the wisest ends, has the power of substituting chimeras, in the place of reality ; and it is no trifling ingredient in the suffering, and enjoyment of humanity, that the mind is thus often a dupe to her own fictions. We are literally the children of illusion, but have the less ground of complaint that they are full as frequently for, as against us. In the simplest narration, as well as in the dramatic representation of past events, we are strangely disposed to consider ourselves as present, and to picture the various scenes on which our attentions rest, however long elapsed, as passing in immediate review before us. So that neither is this figure always improper, but when the passions are inflamed. Take an example

112 *Objections to the Seasons, considered.*

in point, from Autumn, for which poor Thomson, as usual, has been tried and cast with a vengeance.

Say then, where lurk the vast eternal springs,  
That, like creating Nature, lie conceal'd  
From mortal eye, yet with their lavish stores  
Refresh the globe, and all its joyous tribes?  
O thou pervading Genius, given to man,  
To trace the secrets of the dark abyss,  
O lay the mountains bare! and wide display  
Their hidden structure to th' astonish'd view!  
Strip from the branching Alps their piny load;  
The huge incumbrance of horrific woods  
From Asian Taurus, from Imaus stretch'd  
Athwart the roving Tartar's sullen bounds!  
Give opening Hemus to my searching eye,  
And high Olympus pouring many a stream!  
O from the founding summits of the north,  
The Dofrine hills, thro' Scandinavia roll'd  
To farthest Lapland and the frozen main;  
From lofty Caucasus, far-seen by those  
Who in the Caspian and black Euxine toil;  
From cold Riphean rocks, which the wild Rus  
Believes the \* stony girdle of the world;  
And all the dreadful mountains, wrapt in storm  
Whence wide Siberia draws her lonely floods;  
O sweep th' eternal snows! Hung o'er the deep,  
That ever works beneath his founding base,

---

\* The Muscovites call the Riphean mountains Weliki Cameny-poy, that is, the great stony Girdle; because they suppose them to encompass the whole earth.

Bid Atlas, propping heaven, as Poets feign,  
His subterranean wonders spread ! unveil  
The miny caverns, blazing on the day,  
Of Abyssinia's cloud-compelling cliffs,  
And of the bending \* Mountains of the Moon !  
O'er-topping all these giant sons of earth,  
Let the dire Andes, from the radiant line  
Stretch'd to the stormy seas that thunderround  
The southern pole, their hideous deeps unfold !  
Amazing scene ! Behold ! the glooms disclose,  
I see the rivers in their infant beds !  
Deep, deep I hear them, lab'ring to get free !  
I see the leaning strata, artful rang'd ;  
The gaping fissures to receive the rains,  
The melting snows, and ever-dripping fogs.  
Strow'd bibulous above I see the sands,  
The pebbly gravel next, the layers then  
Of mingled moulds, of more retentive earths,  
The gutter'd rocks and mazy-running clefts ;  
That, while the stealing moisture they transmit,  
Retard its motion, and forbid its waste.  
Beneath th' incessant weeping of these drains,  
I see the rocky Siphons stretch'd immense,  
The mighty reservoirs, of hardened chalk,  
Or stiff compacted clay, capacious form'd.  
O'erflowing thence, the congregated stores,  
The crystal treasures of the liquid world,  
Thro' the stirr'd sands a bubbling passage burst ;

---

\* A range of mountains in Africa, that surround almost all Monomotapa.

And welling out, around the middle steep,  
 Or from the bottoms of the bosom'd hills,  
 In pure effusion flow.——

THE exceptions frequently made to this passage, are in my opinion, a singular instance of that strange inflexibility, which in some minds equally deadens the affections, to all the charms of nature and art. What a vast and marvellous scene has the muse of Thomson, thus happily and accurately disclosed. Into how many deep and awful caverns does he penetrate, and what a rich variety of original imagery teem on his view, while he unravels the mysteries of the deep, and points out the various windings of the watery world! He enters on the description of a contrivance so wonderfully adapted to the numerous exigencies of nature, and nature's works, full of astonishment at the sagacity and extent of those powers of thought and intelligence from which her most hidden and intricate energies, *have no covering*. This philosophical investigation from beginning to end, is not less richly embellished, than justly executed. His mind evidently labours under the weight of the subject, while he traces the *rivers* to their source, and delineates their origin, with all the aids of science, and all the graces of poetry. Vivacity in composition, depends more, perhaps, on a proper use of interrogation, than

than of any other rhetorical or poetical figure whatever. In this pointed manner, the enquiry commences, which imparts propriety and spirit, to every subsequent idea. The whole passage is a lively and pathetic address to the *Genius* of philosophy, who for that purpose is personified, and supposed an attentive spectator of that amazing operation and process, by which rivers and openings, thus emerge from the bowels of the earth, and communicate a fresh supply of water to the surface. So that giving existence to fiction in this particular instance, and figuring so happily an immediate solution of the difficulties proposed, is a specimen of poetical machinery, that in truth, does credit to his *Genius*.

THUS in reviewing the defects of the *Seasons*, I have purposely mentioned, whatever occurred to me in extenuation of them. What heart, conscious of its own frailty, would not tremble to arraign with severity, and without alleviation those of others. There is no doubt, after all, but Readers will take the same liberty I do, and praise or blame, just as the Author, or passage, happens to please, or disgust them. From such, I am certain, Thomson has nothing to fear, and with them I leave him implicitly. There are others, who set their own feelings aside, and appeal to I know not

what, antiquated abstractions, for a sanction to their opinions. These, to borrow the language of the *Bar*, are by much the most exceptionable part of his jurors, and I wish only to prevent their having a vote in the verdict against him, as they are by no means whatever, his peers.——

THESE sentiments, in conjunction with others of a similar nature, are happily countenanced, by an authority, not inferior to any in the English language. And, I conclude this tedious Chapter with his opinion, in a case directly to the purpose; whose uncommon delicacy of taste, laid no restraint whatever, either on the generosity of his temper, or the gentleness of his heart. *A true Critic*, says Addison, *ought to dwell rather upon excellencies than imperfections, to discover the concealed beauties of a writer, and communicate to the world such things as are worth their observation. The most exquisite words, and finest strokes of an Author, are those which very often appear the most doubtful and exceptionable to a man who wants a relish for polite learning; and they are those which a sour undistinguishing Critic, generally attacks with the greatest violence. Tully observes, that it is very easy to brand or fix a mark upon what he calls verbum ardens, or, as it may be rendered into English, a glowing bold expression, and to turn it into ridicule by a cold ill-natured criticism. A little wit is equally capable of exposing a beauty, and of aggravating a fault;*  
and

and though such a treatment of an Author, naturally produces indignation in the mind of an understanding Reader, it has however its effect, among the generality of those whose hands it falls into, the rabble of mankind being very apt to think that every thing which is laughed at with any mixture of wit, is ridiculous in itself.

## C H A P. V.

*On the Object of the Seasons.*


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*Attend,  
 Whoe'er thou art, whom these delights can touch,  
 Whose candid bosom the refining love  
 Of nature warms, O! listen to my song;  
 And I will guide thee to her favourite walks,  
 And teach thy solitude her voice to hear,  
 And point her loveliest features to thy view.*

THE exchange of verbal, or rather polemical, for what may be called sentimental criticism, creates sensations similar to such as arise from the recent absence of positive pain. Our track has been hitherto uneven, perplexed, and tedious, but we are now arrived at the extremity so long in view. The fatiguing part of the tour is over, and all to come, is easy, inviting, and delightful.

ALL mankind, in all ages, in all countries, in all characters, have unanimously started in the pursuit of pleasure. To be satisfied with ourselves, is the primary and reigning propensity of the human heart. And the ultimate perfection, accounts sufficiently for this part of our system. We indulge it accordingly, in the same wild and irregular variety,

riety, which marks the different habits and complexions of our minds. The Idler, has his object in lounging, the miser in hoarding, the ambitious in climbing, and the prodigal in wasting. This is that wonderful and inexplicable enchantment, which has produced every metamorphosis that chequers the annals of humanity since the world began; which still maintains an unlimited sovereignty over life and manners, and, by which the heart of man has been dragged through so many scenes, flung into so many transports, and plunged into so many perplexities.

FROM the various and strange phenomena of this kind, which the history of individuals in conjunction with that of society exhibits, I have sometimes, rashly enough perhaps, imagined, that the desire of pleasure might be equally essential to the being, and well-being, of the mental, as that of proper aliment, is to the corporeal part of our frame. Curiosity, at least, which is the great acting spring in all intellectual improvements, derives its origin and elasticity, from this constitutional impulse. And, the benevolent and wise dispositions of Providence, are not more obvious in any thing whatever, than that we do not more naturally breathe, than our affections go out after objects of a certain cast and quality. The moment we open our eyes around us, aversion or complacency, are sensations inseparable from whatever we behold or feel. As

if the various objects of perception were commissioned by some benignant, but invisible being, to warn us, what we should avoid and pursue, and endowed for that purpose with a language, which the human heart instinctively understands.

WHETHER it is, that we find it necessary to fly from ourselves, and shun the mortifying suggestions of reflection?——Whether the merciful Author of our beings, to promote that activity and diligence on which our felicity so essentially depends, has graciously annexed certain agreeable sensations to every degree of exertion?——Whether to convince us, how extremely inadequate all our present acquisitions are, to the innate breathings, and conscious exigences of a rational and immortal principle; it might not be deemed necessary in the formation of a constitution so delicate and multifarious, thus to bribe us with the prospect of pleasure in the discharge of our duty?——In short, whether one or other, or all of these, be the cause of this universal *stimulus* in human nature, it is not possible, perhaps, for us to determine; nor, would it answer any valuable purpose though we could. The reality of the fact, is the chief thing connected with our present speculations. And, taking that for granted, the question is, Does the *Seasons* of Thomson, or do they not, contribute to that effect? I will answer, by an appeal to every person of taste who has read them, whether they do not  
present

present us with many masterly paintings of nature, which necessarily charm in the image, as well as in the original. Indeed, the variations and degrees of beauty are infinite, and our Author has enriched his poem with almost every excellence that the exterior of creation affords.

THERE is hardly any one so absolutely dull as not to relish, as not to be charmed with the inexpressible sweetness and delicacy of nature, in those months of the year, when she appears to most advantage. Even winter clothes her in mourning, not in deformity, and like the fairest of her offspring, she is then only so much the more lovely and affecting for being in tears. Some indeed, want ears, others have but very imperfect eyes, and what is a more deplorable defect than either, many seem to have no heart; but here the fault lies not in what may be called the subject, but in the medium and powers of sensation. It would appear, however, that nature has established a very strong and palpable correspondence, between every thing amiable, elegant, and beautiful in the structure and scale of her works, and certain feelings in the human heart. And we derive no inconsiderable share of innocent and unmolested enjoyment, as well as the greatest utility, from the unavoidable exercise of all our perceptive faculties.

To this strange mysterious and sympathetic harmony, by which the finest sensations of mind and  
fairest

fairest forms and assemblages of things, are so happily and sweetly united, the muse of Thomson was constantly attuned. He knew well how his own heart was charmed, and he loved mankind too sincerely, and understood their nature too thoroughly, not to believe them possessed of the same sensibility. Read but his *Seasons*, from end to end, and inspect the agreeable workings of your own feelings, as you proceed. A single perusal of his poem in this manner, will give you a juster idea of his merit, than all that language can express in his praise. What a striking and rich exuberance of sentimental imagery and ideas, mark, embellish, and exalt his simplest narrations. How finely does he recall to our memories, in terms equally competent and picturesque, all those tepid vapours, embroiled skies, and fragrant exhalations, which indicate the vigour of reviving nature.—But his enthusiasm flames out with more than ordinary ardour and vehemence in delineating the rural simplicity, and ideal innocence of what has been so frequently called the golden age. And, who knows not, that to such imaginary pictures of felicity, we owe many of the most delightful passages in modern, not less, than in ancient poetry. For absolute perfection in all the finer feelings, softer virtues, and sympathetic affections of humanity, in conjunction with the full possession of every social convenience, and every social enjoyment, however repugnant to fact, and  
experience,

experience, is still one of the most ravishing and enchanting fictions that lays hold on the fancy.

The first fresh dawn then wak'd the gladdened race  
Of uncorrupted man, nor blush'd to see.  
The sluggard sleep beneath its sacred beam :  
For their light slumbers gently fum'd away ;  
And up they rose as vigorous as the sun,  
Or to the culture of the willing glebe,  
Or to the chearful tendance of the flock.  
Meantime the song went round ; and dance and sport,  
Wisdom and friendly talk, successive, stole  
Their hours away : while in the rosy vale  
Love breath'd his infant sighs, from anguish free,  
And full replete with bliss ; save the sweet pain,  
That inly thrilling, but exalts it more.  
Nor yet injurious act, nor surly deed,  
Was known among those happy sons of Heaven ;  
For reason and benevolence were law.  
Harmonious nature too look'd smiling on.  
Clear shone the skies, cool'd with eternal gales,  
And balmy spirit all. The youthful sun  
Shot his best rays, and still the gracious clouds  
Drop'd fatness down ; as o'er the swelling mead,  
The herds and flocks, commixing, play'd secure.  
This when, emergent from the gloomy wood,  
The glaring lion saw, his horrid heart  
Was meekened, and he join'd his sullen joy.  
For music held the whole in perfect peace :  
Soft sigh'd the flute : the tender voice was heard,  
Warbling the varied heart ; the woodlands round  
Apply'd

Apply'd their quire ; and winds and waters flow'd  
In consonance. Such were those prime of days.

THERE is but little merit in mere negative description. It is much easier, at least, in most cases, to say what is not, than what is. For the absence of those things which fill us with regret, is a convenient enough resource for materials to complete a design, when nothing better is at hand. Aware of this circumstance, our Poet, from what in these degenerate days life is not, happily figures what then it must have been. Several ideas in this account shew, either that he had his eye on a celebrated passage in Milton, or, that they both copied the same original. I do not mean, by the quotation, to contrast their merit. The reader may do that or not, as he pleases, but the productions of two such masters of their art, where the thought is materially the same, must be entertaining. What a pity their ears were not as similar, as their genius. Thus run the Miltonian measures :

So pass'd they naked on, nor shunn'd the sight  
Of God or Angel, for they thought no ill :  
So hand in hand they pass'd, the loveliest pair  
That ever since in love's embraces met ;  
Adam the goodliest man of men since born  
His sons, the fairest of her daughters Eve.  
Under a tuft of shade that on a green  
Stood whispering soft, by a fresh fountain side

They

They sat them down; and after no more toil  
Of their sweet gard'ning labour, then suffic'd  
To recommend cool zephyrs, and made ease  
More easy, wholesome thirst and appetite  
More grateful, to their supper-fruits they fell,  
Nectarine fruits which the compliant boughs  
Yielded them, side-long as they sat recline  
On the soft downy bank damask'd with flowers :  
The savory pulp they chew, and in the rind  
Still as they thirsted scoop the brimming stream,  
Nor gentle purpose, nor endearing smiles  
Wanted, nor youthful dalliance as befits  
The fair couple link'd in happy nuptial league,  
Alone as they. About them frisking play'd  
All beasts of th' earth, since wild, and of all chase  
In wood or wilderness, forest or den ;  
Sporting the lion ramp'd, and in his paw  
Dandled the kid ; bears, tigers, ounces, pards,  
Gambol'd before them ; th' unwieldy elephant  
To make them mirth us'd all his might, and wreath'd  
His lithe proboscis ; close the serpent fly  
Insinuating, wove with gordian twine  
His breaded train, and of his fatal guile  
Gave proof unheeded ; others on the grass  
Couch'd, and now fill'd with pasture grazing fat,  
Or bedward ruminating, for the sun  
Declin'd was hasting now with full career  
To th' ocean isles, and in th' ascending scale  
Of heav'n, the stars that usher evening, rose.

It sometimes happens, in adjusting the rank of  
fine Writers, as it does in deciding on the compa-  
rative

rative excellence of particular characters, in public or private life; inferior, is often lost in the dazzling splendour of superior merit. Few Moderns, discover so much of that true poetic fire, which in all the genuine sons of Apollo, burns with a lambent, but inexhaustible flame, as Dr. Beattie. To which of the softer tones of nature is not his muse happily and peculiarly responsive. With strong creative powers, a lively and rich sensibility of heart, and a taste delicately turned, for catching the symmetry and sublimity of things; his strains are full of simplicity and elegance, sometimes rise to a majesty and grace, but seldom to be found in the poetry of the age. The following part of a stanza from his *Minstrel*; has often charmed me; and I will venture to produce it, as not out of time, after all the flowers of *Parnassus*, with which both Thomson, and Milton, have adorned the same idea.

Sweet were your shades, O ye primeval groves,  
 Whose boughs to man his food and shelter lent,  
 Pure in his pleasures, happy in his loves,  
 His eye still smiling and his heart content.  
 Then, hand in hand, health, sport, and labour went.

THERE is not perhaps, a Poet in our language, who worships so devoutly, and in a manner so rational and manly, at the shrine of female beauty as Thomson does. Sensible of its inexpressible energy

on the masculine mind, he exhibits it in all its virgin charms, and brings it forth polished and complete, an exquisite model of symmetry and excellence. His pathetic address to Amanda, shews how deeply he felt the perfection of the object described.

And thou, Amanda, come, pride of my song !  
Form'd by the graces, loveliness itself !  
Come with those downcast eyes, sedate and sweet,  
Those looks demure, that deeply pierce the soul,  
Where, with the light of thoughtful reason mix'd,  
Shines lively fancy and the feeling heart :  
O come ! and while the rosy-footed May  
Steals blushing on, together let us tread  
The morning dews, and gather in their prime  
Fresh blooming flowers, to grace thy braided hair,  
And thy lov'd bosom that improves their sweets.

His picture of a flower garden, is drawn with matchless delicacy and spirit. Here every thing is arranged in the best order, and aptly distinguished by its right name, its proper place, and its true colouring. His muse, like the genius of the spot he delineates, wherever she alights, intermingles the beauties of nature and art, with equal animation and taste, produces a world of ideas, not less elegant than new, and breathes a profusion of flowers and herbs, and sweets, and scents, and all manner of fruits. So that whoever can read this picturesque sketch, without feeling a most sensible delight,  
may

may well enough be compared to a statue in the midst of the Graces, surrounded with all the luxuries which the finest soil, and the finest season can produce.

At length the finish'd garden to the view  
 Its vistas opens, and its alleys green.  
 Snatch'd thro' the verdant maze, the hurried eye  
 Distracted wanders ; now the bowery walk  
 Of covert close, where scarce a speck of day  
 Falls on the lengthen'd gloom, protracted sweeps :  
 Now meets the bending sky ; the river now  
 Dimpling along, the breezy ruffled lake,  
 The forest darkening round, the glittering spire,  
 Th' ethereal mountain, and the distant main.  
 But why so far excursive ? when at hand,  
 Along these blushing borders, bright with dew,  
 And in yon mingled wilderness of flowers,  
 Fair-handed spring unbofoms every grace ;  
 Throws out the snow-drop, and the crocus first ;  
 The daisy, primrose, violet darkly blue,  
 And polyanthus of unnumber'd dyes ;  
 The yellow wall-flower, stain'd with iron brown ;  
 And lavish stock that scents the garden round :  
 From the soft wing of vernal breezes shed,  
 Anemonies ; auriculas, enrich'd  
 With shining meal o'er all their velvet leaves ;  
 And full ranunculas, of glowing red.  
 Then comes the tulip-race, where beauty plays  
 Her idle freaks ; from family diffus'd  
 To family, as flies the father-dust,  
 The varied colours run ; and, while they break

On the charm'd eye, th' exulting florist marks,  
With secret pride, the wonders of his hand.  
No gradual bloom is wanting; from the bud,  
First-born of spring, to summer's musky tribes :  
Nor hyacinths, of purest virgin white,  
Low-bent, and blushing inward; nor jonquils,  
Of potent fragrance; nor Narcissus fair,  
As o'er the fabled fountain hanging still;  
Nor broad carnations, nor gay-spotted pinks;  
Nor, shower'd from every bush, the damask-rose.  
Infinite numbers, delicacies, smells,  
With hues on hues expression cannot paint,  
The breath of Nature, and her endless bloom.

IN short, the springing of plants,—the early budding of every tender thing,—the sprouting stems,—the verdure of the fields,—the fragrance of rising herbs,—the foliation of trees,—the sun's returning warmth,—prolific rains,—fostering breezes,—vernal dews,—the pairing of animals,—young ones of all kinds,—the singing of birds,—the *passion of the groves*, the influence of *Spring*, on the human heart,—connubial attachment,—and domestic bliss : are all subjects naturally calculated to charm the fancy, and interest the passions; and their taste must be fastidious indeed, who acknowledge not, that Thomson does them more than ordinary justice.

HE views and celebrates, the\* approach of Summer, in strains singularly lively and enchanting. It seems as if an idea of advancing maturity, had

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\* I have seen a manuscript poem called the *Season*, describing one of our summer *Watering Places*, from which the Author has indulged me with the following extract. As it is somewhat in the manner, though by no means an exact imitation of Thomson, I give it to the publick merely as a curiosity.

*Deck'd in sweet flowrets, lo! the season comes:  
And o'er the heath, with sullen strides and slow,  
Winter reluctant scowls away. The spring,  
In all her virgin gaiety and pride  
Now drops her veil. Aurora stands confess'd  
The swarthy empress of the "circling year!"  
Mild and majestic, are the lovely forms  
Which hail in softest blushes her approach!  
All nature feels her touch, and hears her voice,  
And with increasing warmth and vigour, lives.  
The fields reviving in her presence smile,  
And put forth all their charms. Each flow'ry bud  
Unfolds a thousand hues, a thousand scents,  
Which blended, fan the air with rich perfume,  
And gratify the sight. The gurgling brook,  
More smoothly, winds its way down sloping dales,  
And fills the neighb'ring haunts with sweeter sounds.  
The oaks lift up their lofty heads, and fling  
Their shaggy arms, with negligence abroad.  
Each little hill, in vernal sweets abounds,*

fired his muse with a new accession of alacrity and joy. Invocation is the trite resource of the most despicable rhymsters, but that of Thomson to *Inspiration*, is marked with an ardour and originality, truly characteristic of genius.

Come *Inspiration*! from thy hermit seat,  
By mortal seldom found: may fancy dare,

---

*And every bank its best embroid'ry wears.*

*The groves, frequented by the feather'd race*

*In luxury of dress to please, their guests*

*Appear superlatively gay. And all*

*The laughing vallies round express*

*In chaste confusion what they inly feel.*

*The green turf cheers the eye: From yonder wood*

*What dulcet notes in wild profusion rise,*

*And waft soft music on the trembling ear?*

*At morn, e'er yet the drowsy world awake,*

*Or busy life incessant toil renew,*

*Quick from the sun, a flood of glory bursts*

*Which fills with red magnificence the heavens,*

*The cold earth, warms; exhales the balmy dew;*

*Impregnates every thing with life; revives*

*And cheers the human heart. Nor do yon clouds*

*Pour all their moisture on the yawning glebe*

*At random. Nature regulates the whole:*

*By her command they drink their liquid stores,*

*And drop down fatness in prolific rains.*

*The very winds bring Summer on their wings*

*And all our teeming hemisphere discharge*

*Of noxious vapours and pernicious fog.*

\* \* \* \* \*

From thy fix'd serious eye, and raptur'd glance  
 Shot on furrounding Heaven, to steal one look  
 Creative of the poet, every power,  
 Exalting to an extasy of soul.

It is hard to conceive any ideas more apposite and lively than those by which, he marks the joyous-appearance of the sun. He clothes this glorious object in the most magnificent and majestic splendor. The shades of darkness, and all their concomitant horrors, fly every where before him, and the horizon kindles into one beauteous and universal blaze, as he rises and flings his beams abroad. Thomson's address on this occasion is manly, pathetic, and natural.

But yonder comes the powerful king of day,  
 Rejoicing in the east. The lessening cloud,  
 The kindling azure, and the mountain's brow  
 Illum'd with fluid gold, his near approach  
 Betoken glad. Lo ! now apparent all,  
 Aslant the dew bright earth, and colour'd air,  
 He looks in boundless majesty abroad ;  
 And sheds the shining day, that burnish'd plays  
 On rocks, and hills, and towers, and wandering streams,  
 High gleaming from afar, Prime cheerer Light !  
 Of all material Beings first and best !  
 Efflux divine ! Nature's resplendent robe !  
 Without whose vesting beauty all were wrapt  
 In unessential gloom ; and thou, O Sun,

Soul

Soul of surrounding worlds ! in whom best seen  
Shines out thy Maker ! may I sing of thee ?

The thoughts in the following description are all strictly philosophical, at the same time that they owe much of their beauty to poetry. And it is difficult to say which deserves most praise, the justness of the idea, or the elegance of the expression. The mysterious and prodigious powers of attraction, by which the *Sun*, as centers of the system, pervades, unites, and directs the whole, fill the poet's imagination with astonishment and transport. Indeed the communication of light and life to the whole planetary worlds that roll in everlasting rotation around us, as it is one of the most wonderful operations, of nature is a conception equal to the boldest exertions of the human intellect. And on this occasion our author adopts it with propriety.—The solar orb, or throne, in solemn procession with the *seasons*, the *hours*, the *rains*, the *dews*, the *zephyrs*, and even the *storms* mingling in his train—the mineral beds penetrated by his rays, and ripening by degrees into a rich variety of metalline ore—the very rocks impregnated by his prolific beams producing the most precious diamonds, and the whole smiling creation gratefully acknowledging his dominion—are a few of the leading circumstances that heighten this piece of

exquisite painting. Instead of a more particular analysis of the passage take it intire.

'Tis by thy secret, strong, attractive force,  
As with a chain indissoluble bound,  
Thy system rolls entire : from the fair bourne  
Of utmost *Saturn*, wheeling wide his round  
Of thirty years ; to *Mercury*, whose disk  
Can scarce be caught by philosophic eye,  
Lost in the near effulgence of thy blaze.

Informer of the planetary train !  
Without whose quick'ning glance their cumbrous orbs  
Were brute unlovely mass, inert and dead,  
And not, as now, the green abodes of life !  
How many forms of being wait on thee !  
Inhaling spirit ; from th' unfettered mind,  
By thee sublim'd, down to the daily race,  
The mixing myriads of thy setting beam.

The vegetable world is also thine,  
Parent of *Seasons* ! who the pomp precede  
That waits thy throne, as thro' thy vast domain,  
Annual, along the bright ecliptic road,  
In world-rejoicing state, it moves sublime.  
Mean-time, th' expecting nations, circled gay  
With all the various tribes of foodful earth,  
Implore thy bounty, or send grateful up  
A common hymn : while, round thy beaming car,  
High-seen, the *Seasons* lead, in sprightly dance  
Harmonious knit, the rosy-finger'd *Hours*,  
The *Zephyrs* floating loose, the timely *Rains*,

Of bloom ethereal the light-footed *Dews*,  
And softened into joy the surly *Storms*.  
These, in successive turn, with lavish hand,  
Shower every beauty, every fragrance shower,  
Herbs, flowers, and fruits; till, kindling at thy touch,  
From land to land is flush'd the vernal year.

Nor to the surface of enlivened earth,  
Graceful with hills and dales, and leafy woods,  
Her liberal treasures, is thy force confin'd :  
But, to the bowel'd cavern darting deep,  
The mineral kinds confess thy mighty power.  
Effulgent; hence the veiny marble shines ;  
Hence Labour draws his tools; hence burnish'd War  
Gleams on the day ; the nobler works of Peace  
Hence bless mankind, and generous Commerce binds  
The round of nations in a golden chain.

The unfruitful rock itself, impregn'd by thee,  
In dark retirement forms the lucid stone.  
The lively Diamond drinks thy purest rays,  
Collected light, compact ; that, polish'd bright,  
And all its native lustre let abroad,  
Dares, as it sparkles on the fair one's breast,  
With vain ambition emulate her eyes.  
At thee the Ruby lights its deepening glow,  
And with a waving radiance inward flames.  
From thee the Sapphire, solid ether, takes  
Its hue cerulean ; and, of evening tinct,  
The purple-streaming Amethyst is thine.  
With thy own smile the yellow Topaz burns.  
Nor deeper verdure dyes the robe of Spring,  
When first she gives it to the southern gale,  
Than the green Emerald flows. But, all combin'd,

Thick thro' the whitening Opal play thy beams ;

Or, flying several from its surface, form

A trembling variance of revolving hues,

As the site varies in the gazer's hand.

The very dead creation, from thy touch,

Assumes a mimic life. By thee refin'd,

In brighter mazes the relucient stream

Plays o'er the mead. The precipice abrupt,

Projecting horror on the blackened flood,

Softens at thy return. The desert joys

Wildly, thro' all his melancholy bounds.

Rude ruins glitter ; and the briny deep,

Seen from some pointed promontory's top,

Far to the blue horizon's utmost verge,

Restless, reflects a floating gleam. But this,

And all the much-transported Muse can sing,

Are to thy beauty, dignity, and use,

*Unequal far ; great delegated Source*

*Of light, and life, and grace, and joy below !*

In Gray's posthumous letters we find a description of the rising sun, to which there is hardly a parallel in our language. The editor quotes a similar one from an old English Divine, which, for the time when it was wrote, is wonderfully beautiful indeed ! It strikes me, however, as too minutely laboured to make any great and lasting impression. That from the Poet awakens in the mind, sensations of grandeur and simplicity, corresponding with such as we feel from an immediate view of the original, but that from the Preacher rather suggests a

comparison than communicates a pleasure. The one is taken from the object while its image was yet fresh and glowing on the writer's fancy, and possesses the heart intire; the other is a mere closet-production, composed from the gleanings of memory, and only pretty enough to afford imagination some temporary amusement. The scene of the former is on the sea-shore; the latter is connected with no specific circumstance whatever to give it energy.

I saw the clouds and dark vapours open gradually to right and left, rolling over one another in great smoaky wreathes, and the tide, as it flowed gently in upon the sands, first whitening, then slightly tinged with gold and blue; and all at once a little line of insufferable brightness, that, before I can write these five words, was grown to half an orb, and now to a whole one, too glorious to be distinctly seen.

GRAY.

As when the sun approaches towards the gates of the morning, he first opens a little eye of heaven, and sends away the spirits of darkness; gives light to the early, and calls up the lark to matins, and, by and by, gilds the fringes of a cloud, and peeps over the eastern hills, thrusting out his golden horns—and still, while a man tells the story, the sun gets up higher, till he shews a fair face and a full light.

TAYLOR.

The setting, as well as the rising sun, is at the same instant a source of the sweetest and sublimest conceptions

conceptions that can enter into the mind of man: Who has not then frequently seen him in the softest and most majestic lustre; plunging among piles or columns of broken and burnished clouds, as if he meant by

*Arraying with reflected purple and gold  
The clouds that on his western throne await,*

to make those he leaves in darkness the more sensibly regret his absence? The various circumstances of this glowing but common scene are noted in the following lines, with elegance and simplicity:

Low walks the sun, and broadens by degrees  
Just o'er the verge of day: The shifting clouds  
Assembled gay, a richly gorgeous train,  
In all their pomp attend his setting throne:  
Air, earth and ocean smile immense. And now  
As if his weary chariot sought the bowers  
Of *Amphitrite*, and her tending nymphs,  
So Grecian fable sung, he dips his orb,  
Now half immers'd; and now a golden curve  
Gives one bright glance, then total disappears.

Those objects, which are most familiar to us, have often a very pleasing effect in description. It flatters perhaps our self-love to find such things as have frequently attracted our attention, thus represented with simplicity and justness. In truth, by a careful inspection of our mental faculties, we

may soon be satisfied, that whatever facilitates or assists their general or respective operations, creates a certain degree of delight. We have no pleasure, and it is proper for obvious reasons that we should have none, but in exercise; and these are always and uniformly of the same complexion with the powers exerted. Such as result intirely from the gratification of appetite are low and brutal; the indulgence of certain passions produce others more refined; but intellectual enjoyments are most substantial of all. In polished life, the fine arts is one of many mediums by which this last and purest species is acquired. And imagination and memory, are as much charmed, with an elegant and masterly exhibition of old or familiar objects, as the understanding is with new or occult ones. So that we naturally congratulate ourselves in the possession of every accession to science, in proportion to the ease or facility with which it is acquired. Thus, in the present instance, recollection is partly, if not wholly, superseded; and the mind, without any sensible retrospection, replenished with ideas and images perfectly consonant to her own experience. In the passage I shall now quote, there is a beautiful selection of circumstances, that must frequently have struck the attention of every observant mind in the least acquainted with rural affairs. The scene, though singularly homely and  
common,

common, is so full of the most natural simplicity, that there is no reading it without a peculiar degree of satisfaction.—The cows lowing and lounging about the doors to be fed and milked,—the lazy and languishing position of the birds, as they perch among the boughs of the neighbouring trees,—the convenient and cool retreat of the domestic poultry,—the dreaming of the dogs till stung and startled by the wasp,—are all so finely conceived, that a painter has only to give them form and colouring. The design is fairly finished, and all the figures happily arranged and grouped to his hand.

Home from his morning task, the swain retreats ;  
His flock before him stepping to the fold :  
While the full udder'd mother lows around  
The chearful cottage, then expecting food,  
The food of innocence and health ! The daw,  
The rook and magpie, to the grey-grown oaks  
That the calm village in their verdant arms,  
Shelt'ring embrace direct their lazy flight ;  
Where on the mingling boughs they sit embower'd,  
All the hot noon, till cooler hours arise.  
Faint, underneath, the household fowls convene ;  
And in a corner of the buzzing shade,  
The house-dog with the vacant grey-hound lies  
Outstretch'd and sleepy. In his slumbers one  
Attacks the nightly thief, and one exults

O'er

O'er hill and dale; till waken'd by the wasp,  
They starting snap.——

Of the same kind are many of his best and most elaborate descriptions. The wonderful artifice and machinery by which the spider compasses his bloody designs is finished with inimitable propriety and exactness. Perhaps the passage might be quoted as an example of the pathetic, as well as agreeable. For the heart is a sharer in the sympathy it occasions, as well as the fancy in the pleasure it affords.

But chief to heedless flies the window proves  
A constant death; where, gloomily retir'd,  
The villain spider lives cunning and fierce,  
Mixture abhorr'd! Amid a mangled heap  
Of carcases, in eager watch he sits,  
O'erlooking all his waving snares around.  
Near the dire cell the dreadless wanderer oft  
Passes, as oft the ruffian shews his front,  
The prey at last ensnar'd, he dreadful darts,  
With rapid glide along the leaning line;  
And fixing in the wretch his cruel fangs,  
Strikes backward grimly pleas'd: the fluttering wing  
And shriller sound declare extreme distress,  
And ask the helping hospitable hand.

In short, his whole Summer abounds with the most fascinating delineations of nature. Whatever  
is

is most charming, rural and luxuriant in that exuberant and fertile season, is marked in the most brilliant and glowing characters.—The morning, mid-day and afternoon of a Summer day,—the annals of the insect tribes,—rural business, economy and amusement,—the shades, thickets and parts which afford a salutary retreat from the noon-tide sun,—groups of flocks and herds as they browse on the banks of rivers and brooks,—the foaming *fleet* overleaping the enclosure and plunging in the deep,—grottoes, groves and alcoves in all their pleasing pensive horrors,—the noisy cataracts,—Summer raging in the torrid zone,—the coming evening, glowing meteors, and all the beauteous images and vapoury gleams which generally accompany departing light, are fruitful in description as well as in nature, to poetical minds, at least, of the most pleasing, the most lively, and the most romantic impressions.

The obvious tendency of nature is to make all her works complete, and all her children happy. *Spring*, like youth, is the period of hope; and *Summer*, like manhood, matures the desires then imbibed; but *Autumn* is the great period of fruition, where all our toils and prospects terminate, where all our wishes are realized, and where possession supplants the anxieties of expectation.

We are conscious in every undertaking of a very strong propensity to finish, as well as to begin. Under the influence of this idea the prosecution of all our purposes commences and is conducted. There is a certain degree of satisfaction inseparable from our minutest efforts, which, by the constitution of things, is thus held forth as the natural and hereditary reward of our labours. Our mental, as well as corporeal make, is originally formed for activity, and consequently furnished with abundance of springs for keeping it in motion. The more we employ our senses as instruments of intelligence, they necessarily grow the more expert and acute. Indeed, we possess no power which is not susceptible of improvement; and, what is more, which we are not born with dispositions to improve. Indolence of every kind is adventitious to our natures, and arises solely from habits of debility and ignorance: just as in our bodies one disease perpetually engenders another; for the nervous, like the social system, grows the stronger, the more it is braced. And all the flights of imagination, but especially all the acquisitions of the understanding, happily and amply repay themselves. This gives vigour and effect to every liberal exertion, fills the mind with confidence in the instant of designing, and fires the heart with courage and alacrity from first to last through the whole execution.

Possessed

Possessed of some such ideas as these, Thomson wrote, and we should read and digest this part of his poem. Here perfection and fruition, which in the science of man are two words expressing but one idea, make the *burthen of his song*. And how finely does he exhibit the genius of universal nature, as having thus finished the work to which all the seasons in their turn are respectively subservient. For this purpose they seem constant only in disclosing one continual round of vicissitude and variety. Nature dies but in *Winter*, to revive and flourish in *Spring*; and her vigorous complexion in *Summer* is but a prelude to her maturity in *Autumn*. Then, how soon and severely do we not all see and feel a most material and affecting change. Is not that endearing and universal charm, which flattered our senses and warmed our hearts, so fully and sweetly but a little ago, already and for ever irrecoverable? What a pale, and ghastly, and withered aspect darkens and deflowers every prospect we behold! Where now that refreshing gloss, that beauteous bloom, and those delightful scenes, that invited us to the country, and on which we feasted so deliciously in solitude! Are not the operations of nature sensibly suspended by some invisible power, and her various offspring apparently infected by the momentary decay of their mother? How mute and dispirited the tuneful tribes that were wont to  
chear

cheer us with their chirruping, and to chant in wanton extacy their evening and their morning carols to the ravished ear. The fields every where relinquish their former verdure and luxury, the leaves all over the woods drop fast from the trees, the whole vegetable world hangs its head in despondency, the air resigns its genial softness and warmth, the day shortens in proportion as the sun declines, and the darkness and *length* of the night increase as the earth grows chilly and the atmosphere cool. Such, O man, is the fleeting nature and unalterable destiny of all thy present enjoyments! Does not pleasure in every form, as if instinctively, shrink from thy chastest touch? The purest blessedness of which thy heart is susceptible fades insensibly away, and frequently dies in the very instant of fruition. Which of all thy attachments has not, by some unaccountable fatality inseparable from the warmest ebullitions of sensibility, fermented the general bitterness of thy fate? Thus, the objects of thy best and dearest affections, as well as those of thy senses, are in a state of perpetual vicissitude and change; and, like ill-treated guests, start from thy fondest embraces, and leave thy heart to suffer infinitely more exquisitely in their absence than ever it enjoyed in their presence. Ah! how deceptive those endearments, which, in the momentary sensa-

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tions they produce, sow the seeds of eternal regret.

It was natural for our Poet, in such a train of sentimental thinking, to be struck with the general and apparent felicity that prevails in the present impaired state of society. He could not help reflecting, that men were not always thus cordial, thus convenient, thus happy, and his philosophic muse seizes, with singular felicity, on that very period, when the arts of life, and chiefly of agriculture, began first to be cultivated. For, strange as it may seem, men never turn their thoughts to husbandry, till, by some means or other, they find themselves in full possession of peace, independence, and plenty. But, when once the blessings of regular society are thus accumulated, they generally, and, in every country under heaven, discover a number of internal and inexhaustible resources which they knew not before. Such is the wise destination of Providence, that as there is no end of human toil, neither is there any limits to human acquisition. Nor is it less instructive than curious to observe with what acuteness and sagacity he traces the progress, influence, and object of *industry*; what precision is every where mingled with the chastest delicacy; what a happy lustre he throws on the history of civil society, and what an intimate acquaintance he discovers with the nature of the hu-

man mind, in all her various stages of improvement. How complete the picture he gives of the earth under the culture and tuition of human skill ! how different from those inhospitable solitudes which are still the dreary habitations of savage barbarity and rudeness !

———— Attemper'd suns arise

Sweet beam'd, and shedding oft through lucid clouds  
A pleasing calm ; while broad, and brown below  
Extensive harvests hang the heavy head,  
Rich, silent, deep, they stand ; for not a gale  
Rolls its light billows o'er the bending plain ;  
A calm of plenty, 'till the ruffled air  
Falls from its poise, and gives the breeze to blow,  
Rent in the fleecy mantle of the sky,  
The clouds fly different ; and the sudden sun  
By fits effulgent gilds the illumin'd field,  
And black by fits the shadows sweep along.  
A gayly checker'd heart expanding view,  
For as the circling eye can shoot around,  
Unbounded tossing in a flood of corn.

His description of the *shipping* on the Thames is in perfect unison with these ideas. Were it asked, what is the most astonishing instance of human ingenuity, which is the greatest miracle of art, or which of all our inventions are most remote from chance, instinct, or necessity, the principal attributes of natural agency ; could we refer to any

thing so justly as the wonders of navigation? A *science* by which we subdue the most boisterous elements, and mould them to purposes of universal utility, walk with safety on the waves of the sea, ride at our ease on the wings of the wind, unite the most distant extremities of the earth, and compass the whole terraqueous globe, without setting a foot on land, by only going out at one point and coming in at another. Hence a *fleet* in full sail is one of the finest spectacles or exhibitions in the whole circle of art. Our different ports abound more with sights of this kind than all the other ports of the world. Nothing indeed strikes a foreigner on approaching the English capital with so much surprise, as the infinite number and variety of vessels which cover the River, like a large wood of old oak stript by some hurricane of their branches and foliage. This busy, complicated, and teeming groupe of things, is depicted by the hand of a master in the following numbers:

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On either hand,  
 Like a long wintry forest, groves of masts  
 Shot up their spires; the bellying sheet between  
 Possess'd the breezy void, the footy hulk  
 Steer'd sluggish on; the splendid barge along  
 Row'd, regular, to harmony; around,  
 The boat, light-skimming, stretch'd its oary wings;  
 While deep the various voice of fervent toil

From

From bank to bank increas'd, whence ribb'd with oak,  
To bear the British thunder black, and bold,  
The roaring vessel rush'd into the main.

Happy they who, far from public commotions, repose themselves in the placid bosom of independence and tranquillity, who are satisfied with ease and competence, and who possess a fund of enjoyment in the attachment of a few worthy friends, and the approbation of their own hearts; which the world at large can neither afford nor allow. Let such only as are impelled by necessity forego the endearments of retirement. What has the delirium of a court, the frippery of fashion; the dull repetition of pleasures that pall the appetite, the fantastic predilection for places of public resort, that often terminates in the ruin of domestic felicity, to compensate for the want of those blessings which in the village so frequently charm the heart, and give new relish to existence. Trust me, ye whose minds are yet pure from the debilitating infection of luxury and licentiousness, there is nothing in all the great or gay world to augment, but much to diminish your happiness. Here opposite interests and opposite passions engender endless and universal contention. For the fiends of social unanimity must do infinite mischief where they have infinite room. But yours is that humble and

sequestered vale which the rough winds of heaven seldom or ever visit. There, are no objects of emulation, no bait for the covetous, nothing to tempt the aspiring, nor irritate the invidious, to stimulate luxury, inflame the passions, or poison the heart. One would imagine, from the general turn of the work, that Thomson's poem was intended chiefly to recommend a country life in preference to that of the town. With how much judgment and delicacy does he not select whatever, at a distance from the bustle of business and the circle of intrigue, is most dear and captivating to the senses? How enchanting and romantic the strains in which he delineates the various scenes of uncultivated nature and genuine simplicity which the different seasons of the year produce? The gathering of fruits is one of those juvenile pastimes which awakens all the tenderness and vivacity of his nature. And his invitation to a task in which the youth of both sexes mingle with so much artless sensibility and attachment, and where the heart is so often feasted with the purest and chastest of all sensations, is perfectly in time, and happily marks the subject of his poem, while it soothes and delights the affections of his readers.

Ye swains now hasten to the hazel bank ;  
Where, down yon dale, the wildly winding brook

Falls

Falls hoarse from steep to steep. In close array,  
Fit for the thickets and the tangling shrub,  
Ye virgins come. For you their latest song  
The woodlands raise; the clustring nuts for you  
The lover finds amid the secret shade;  
And where they burnish on the topmast bough,  
With active vigour crushes down the tree;  
Or shakes them ripe from the resigning husk,  
A glossy shower and of an ardent brown,  
As are the ringlets of Melinda's hair.

Nothing is more descriptive of *Autumn*, or fills the pensive mind with a greater variety of tender and soft sensations, than the view of an orchard while the fruit is a falling. This idea the poet dilates minutely. And it is obvious from several strokes in the passage, that few professed Naturalists have studied and traced the various energies and effects of vegetation with more attention and success than he did. His mind was finely turned for comprehending the essence, connections, and influence of things. In him the love of nature was literally a source of science. Her fair-idea possessed every feeling of his heart, and operated like a spring on all his poetical and speculative powers. He admired her in the most grotesque forms. He took and followed her implicitly wherever she led. Not even those latent and mysterious principles by which the respective fruit

of her several productions shoot up into maturity escape his penetration. While his aim seems only to entertain, the most important lessons of instruction are obliquely suggested. In truth, his muse singles out nothing from the vast multitude of materials that lies open to her inspection which is not replete with food for the understanding, as well as pleasure for the heart.

Obedient to the breeze and beating ray,  
 From the deep loaded bough a mellow shower  
 Incessant melts away. The juicy pear  
 Lies, in soft profusion, scatter'd round.  
 A various sweetness swells the gentle race,  
 By Nature's all refining hand prepar'd;  
 Of temper'd sun, and water, earth and air,  
 In ever changing composition mixt.  
 Such falling frequent thro' the chiller night,  
 The fragrant stores, the wide projected heaps  
 Of apples, which the lusty handed year,  
 Innumerable, o'er the blushing orchard shakes.  
 A various spirit, fresh, delicious keen,  
 Dwells in their gelid pores; and active points  
 The piercing cyder for the thirsty tongue.

There is a something which the senses recognise, and which affects the heart with tranquillity in this period, just as striking to imagination as it is difficult to express. Nature appears to have exhausted all her energies in ripening the product of

the year, and like a grateful mother, after a happy deliverance, silently rejoices over the fruit of her womb. A certain listlessness then enervates and seems to possess the universal principles of things. It is impossible to look around us on this occasion without indulging correspondent sensations. A similar lassitude or relaxation pervades the human frame, tinctures the temper with melancholy, and hushes the heart into a calm. Composure and confidence seem the language or inspiration of the *Season*. For every thing whispers in the sweetest accents, that the world is still under a government peculiarly kind and benign. To such a state of mind, and with the noblest design, the poet addresses himself in these emphatical verses. It shews, as usual in his case, of what true genius is capable, under the management of pure intentions.

Mean-time light shadowing all, a sober calm  
 Fleets unbounder ether, whose least wave  
 Stands tremulous, uncertain where to turn  
 The gentle current : while illumin'd wide,  
 The dewy-skirted clouds imbibe the sun,  
 And thro' their lucid veil his fasten'd force  
 Shed o'er the peaceful world. Then is the time  
 For those whom wisdom and whom nature charm,  
 To steal themselves from the degenerate croud,  
 And soar above this little scene of things ;

To

To tread low thoughted-vice beneath their feet ;  
To sooth the throbbing passions into peace ;  
And wooe lone quiet in her silent walks.

Many of the animal world survive not the fall of the year, and others seem affected with the same temporary languor which then seizes the whole lifeless creation. But chiefly the feathered tribes undergo, in that period, a kind of annual renovation. Groupes of them are seen flocking together indiscriminately, equally forgetful of their former animosities, distinctions, and attachments. Then is the season of their moulting, when most of them change their plumage ; when the appetites of the most savage abate of their fierceness, and when the most loquacious and musical among them, are just as mute and dull as the rest. Such a picturesque circumstance as this the muse of Thomson never omits. It was congenial to that elevated tone of sensibility in which all his sentiments were conceived, his ideas digested, and his images selected.

Haply some widow'd songster pours his plaint,  
For, in faint warblings, thro' the lowing copse,  
While congregated thrushes, linnets, larks,  
And each wild throat, whose artless strains relate,  
Sweil'd all the music of the swarming shades,  
Robb'd of their tuneful souls, now shivering sit

On the dead tree, a dull desponding flock,  
With not a brightness waving o'er their plumes,  
And nought save chattering discord in their notes.

Every thing in the whole circle of the *Seasons*, having thus acted its part, the great concluding scene arrives, which realizes the hopes of the husbandman, and crowns his labour with success. He has nothing now to apprehend from gnawing insects, noxious dews, parching heats, shaking winds, or rotting rains. Plenty of provision is laid up for man and beast, toil for the present is at an end, and the heart no longer suspended between the different palpitations of uncertainty and expectation, relaxes into joy. Thus gratitude, like all other natural propensities, operates sometimes instinctively. For enjoyment uniformly produces an agreeable mixture of transport and vivacity; and every species of gladness that originates from possession ultimately refers to the great Benefactor of the universe. In many cases the human heart seems to recognise the bounteous indulgence of Heaven, in the same manner that the vegetable and brute creation do the energy of nature. The tender buds, and shoots, and blossoms, which adorn the fields and woods in spring, are not more spontaneous than such sensations of happiness, as the gratifications of appetite produce in animal,

and the completion of desire in rational natures, Food to the hungry, and drink to the thirsty, are attended with feelings corresponding, though inferior to those which the discovery of science produces in the speculative, or the accession of new excellence in the moral faculties. And we then act in concert with the general harmony of things when the genuine ebullitions of a glad heart join the voluntary chorus of nature, in solemn acknowledgments to that great and sovereign principle of benignity and life, on whom we depend for whatever we can wish or enjoy. These expressions of a generous and cheerful temper are less or more inseparable from the reception of benefits, but peculiarly common among peasants about the latter end of *Autumn*. And Thomson celebrates the festive scenes which in this manner shut up the year with equal simplicity, beauty, and truth.

Loose to festive joy, the country round  
Laughs with the loud sincerity of mirth,  
Shook to the wind their cares. The toil-strung youth,  
By the quick sense of music taught alone,  
Leaps wildly graceful in the lively dance.  
Her every charm abroad the village toast,  
Young, buxom, warm, in native beauty rich,  
Darts not unmeaning looks; and, where her eye  
Paints an approving smile, with double force,

The cudgel rattles, and the wrestler twines.  
 Age too shines out, and garrulous recounts  
 The feats of youth. Thus they rejoice; nor think  
 That, with to-morrow's sun, their annual toil  
 Begins again the never-ceasing round.

The junction of a strong genius and a fine taste gives most original productions, such an equal degree of perfection in all their parts, as renders a just selection of their superior beauties no easy task. To the few which strike me in this light, the following might be added:—The fields wav- ing with flakes of yellow corn—the reapers en- tering on their cheerful toil—the harvest storm—the sportsman's barbarous delight—the re- treats of genius—the vintage—the origin of rains, fogs, fountains, and rivers—the migra- tions of birds—the *stork* assembly—a patrio- tic panegyric—*Argyle* and *Forbes* gratefully men- tioned—an address to the genius of philosophy—his account of the lunar eclipse—an *ignis fatuus* described—an idea of solitude or abstrac- tion from the world—the genuine love of na- ture.—To quote these however, and other passa- ges of a similar kind at full length, would car- ry me far beyond my intention, which is not so much to compile a new book, as to awaken the attention of the age to the excellence and utility of an old one.

Thomson

Thomson is generally thought to have succeeded better in his Winter than in any other of his *Seasons*. But, may not this preference arise as much from the temper of the reader, as from any inequality in the poem. Melancholy ideas, we all know, are congenial to the human mind. All our faculties and aptitudes are suited to our present situation, and who has not felt, that this is a scene of suffering, not of enjoyment. The circumstances we now possess are strangely affecting and perilous. Equally impelled by the instigations of appetite on the one hand, and the restraints of reason on the other, we are more frequently the sport of both than in due subjection to either.—*Infancy* is lost amidst a multitude of toys, tender anxiety and abortive labour.—*Youth* amidst the dreams of fruition, the visionary elysiums of imagination, and the teasing inquietudes of love.—*Manhood* amidst the vicissitudes of fortune, the requisitions of futurity, and the tortures of disappointment,—and *Age* amidst all those accumulated pangs, perplexities, and ills which shade and sadden the latest stages of humanity. Is not every thing around us visibly hastening to some grand and general revolution, in which we are all sensibly and essentially concerned? What in the living or lifeless world is not thus in a state of change and declension? Whence those dreadful caverns and hollow bowels that sap the foundation

foundation and impair the strength of rocks apparently impregnable and everlasting? those bleak and shaggy fronts that shed around them the gloomy indications of approaching ruin? There is, in truth, no thinking on our present situation,—what we are,—where we are,—and whether destined, without indulging a thousand serious and anxious reflections. To us the annals of the world, and of human nature, are altogether enigmatical: The succession of one generation after another is just as uniform and regular as that of the seasons. Are not our ancestors, what we shall soon be, all swept from the records of the living, save a few, here and there, who, friendless and dispirited, like the scattered remains of a forest after some dreadful storm, are left alone to bend under the rage of misfortune, and look wistfully around for the wonted partners of their hearts in vain. And, alas! how little calculated is all we possess or can possess beneath the sun, to repell the mortifying impression of these ideas. Is not the sweetness of every thing within the reach of our senses very much impaired by the unavoidable inequalities of the human mind, the perpetual intrusions of care, the intervals of health, and the mysterious dispensations of Providence? The truth is, apart from mental, moral and religious improvement, all our present enjoyments are so superficial, so limited, so few, that a very short  
time.

time is sufficient to taste them all. What follows is but a repetition of the same draught, which, from want of novelty, a cloyed appetite, and an insipid taste, becomes at last vapid and nauseous. Nor are the boasted resources of society less precarious and fantastical. How very rarely do we meet with a select association of friends precisely to our liking. We must even put up with such company and conversation as we find, nor, on any occasion whatever, expect to find just such as we wish. And they are singularly fortunate indeed, whose characters are not often mistaken, whose intentions have not been misrepresented, whose foibles are not frequently magnified into unpardonable crimes, and whose company is not sometimes avoided even by such as they most love. So that what between noisy petulance and peevish acrimony, the bitter ribaldry of detraction, and haughty decisions of presumption, friendship sacrificed to the surmises of envy, truth suppressed by the fictions of malignity, selfishness waddling in the form of patriotism, and piety the publick pandar of the most abject and mercenary minds, all our present satisfactions amount to no more than *vanity and vexation of spirit*. Wherever we cast our eyes among the grave, the gay, the idle or the active, the same romantic levities, the same incorrigible follies and the same frivolous amusements are in vogue. Nor is there  
any

any thing so durable in the whole circle of human affairs as a certain predilection in favour of some new extravagance. Does not pride uniformly lord it over humility, and extend her oppressions wherever luxury rears her wanton front? In what quarter of the globe do not the strong prey on the weak, and all condemn or applaud as fortune ebbs or flows? How commonly are the poor treated by the rich with contempt, and the rich by the poor with petulance, perfidy and rudeness? In which of all our politeſt circles is not decency often put to the blush by frantic giddineſs, inſipid buffoonery, the childish puerilities of faſhion, or the empty formalities of affectation? Are not many of the beſt minds early and induſtriouſly poiſoned with an inordinate paſſion for ſplendid inſignificance, and deadened, by the ſavage manœuvres of cuſtom and impoſture, to the moſt beauteous emanations of mental worth? Who knows not, that the clamours of impudence, and ſtratagems of villainy, wax louder and thicker through all the different modifications of ſociety; that vice ſkulks in every diſguiſe that human artifice can put on, and that publick and private integrity is univerſally proſcribed. How aſtoniſhing, that the heart of man ſhould be ſo groſſly impoſed on as it is, with viſions, and phantoms, and dreams, thus utterly abſurd and ridiculous. Take but your eſtimate of

life, from those rounds of extravagance and parade, which glow and glitter so incessantly at a distance, where luxury exhibits all her finery, and gaiety all her charms. In truth, a few individuals excepted, almost all the good-humour we see is assumed. Does not the levity of one party arise from mere novelty, the most capricious and short-lived thing in the world; the giddiness of another from a temporary extravagance, which rushes on the minds of mankind, in proportion as they lose the power of thinking; and what is the delirium of a third but the gusts of inordinate passion, or still more likely the fumes of intemperance. But, Oh! how vapid and hollow must that ceremony be, which is not the language of a warm heart! how insipid those smiles, which indicate no internal pleasantry; how awkward those graces, which spring not from habits of good nature and benevolence. Even here, with all that art and impudence can do to keep folly in countenance, in this same fantastic circle of troublesome equipage, gaudy apparel, high rank, and titles of distinction, the most serious thoughts will at times obtrude themselves. And, no wonder, a few melancholy, moralizing spirits, who neither live, nor think, nor feel like others, grow peevish and morose by ruminating in the shade, when the merriest of all this jovial and joyful fraternity sometimes

times catch the vapours, and hear, or think they hear, an officious echo thus whispering in their ear :

Go, airy triflers, flutter life away ;  
Crown with the mantling juice the goblet high,  
Weave the light dance, with festive freedom gay,  
And live your moment, since the next ye die.

The manifold freaks and foibles of the world are an everlasting fund of the richest ridicule; and one half of mankind are reciprocally occupied in thus breaking their jests on another ; but that astonishing and universal inundation of luxury and listlessness, which characterises, so emphatically, the spirit of the times, suggests very different feelings to serious and sentimental minds. Such was evidently the temper of our author, who, it is probable, seldom thought on the gayer scenes of life, without being put in mind, to borrow an image I know not from whom, of some mountains, which travellers tell us are covered with eternal verdure, while inextinguishable flames prey on their entrails. Thus the dazzling pageantry and pomp of life, which make so many frantic, seem to have touched him with very different emotions. He perceived, from his own, how impossible it is for those of pensive and benevolent dispositions to contemplate the apparent deformity of the moral world, and the

uncertain destiny which hangs over the heads of mortals, with uniform composure and resignation. To this moping and moralizing temper of mind every passage of his *Winter* is finely adapted. How often is the human heart in such a tone as to spurn at every species of comfort which is not administered with sympathy and condolence? Our poet was too manly and generous, as well as too sentimental and humane, to sneer at the delicate distresses of imagination. He knew from experience, that however capricious in their causes, they generally produce the most lamentable and lasting uneasiness. And to their tenderest sensibilities his kindred and affectionate muse is every where responsive. Does he not purposely introduce whatever has a tendency to calm the troubled mind, and soothe the aching heart? For this reason, he dwells most on such things as a sickly fancy generally prefers; and such is his benignity and address, that without uttering a syllable repugnant to his feelings, he changes her bitterness into joy, and from those very objects that filled her with dreary despair, extracts a source of the sweetest and sublimest consolation.

We are at best but very short-sighted in the essence and origin of things, have indeed no knowledge at all but of final causes. Why that which shocks in nature should so frequently please in de-

scription, has hitherto baffled the keenest investigations of philosophy, and probably ever will. The workings of imagination have a subtilty and delicacy in them, which no penetration can trace, which no language can explain. There is, however, an obvious propriety in the fact. Were there no suffering, there could be no enjoyment; vice and virtue is but the same medal reversed, and pain seems not less essential to the harmony of life than pleasure. We are formed, indeed, to receive no satisfaction of any kind, which is not some how affected, seasoned, or heightened by contrast. Nor is the heart so sensibly touched or wrought on by any tones as those which have an equal number of *sharps* and *flats*. So that by thus comparing the image of the poet with its original in nature or memory, the double idea, like counter-parts of the same tune, produces quite a different and new sensation. And, susceptible of the beauties of art, as well as of those of nature, which of us has not seen a very fine description of a very ugly object. Bleak winds, rainy weather, fleets and frosts, and all the variety of gelid forms, which the benumbing colds of *Winter* assume, are of this kind. From these we suffer much, and yet are not displeased to see them well described.

How comfortable the consideration, that we seem designed for quite another purpose, than po-

ring, with a moping and melancholy curiosity, on the darkest side of things. In truth, things have no dark side at all, but what they derive from the vicinity of a cloudy and distempered imagination. The external beauties of nature are finely adapted to charm and invigorate the heart, to fill the mind with vivacity and cheerfulness, and to prevent this most affecting and dismal of all calamities. Nor are the *Muses* ever so well employed as in thus befriending humanity, smoothing the rugged paths of mortality, and bestrewing them with roses. For poetry has not only the power of enriching the dullest subject with elevated diction and melodious numbers, but tames the turbulence of passion, and exhibits, without disguising the most disagreeable objects, in colours equally beautiful, lively and interesting. Thomson does what he can to produce this propitious effect, to make every thing that comes within the circle of his description the means of good humour, to keep our minds in the steady contemplation of whatever is most lovely and joyous, to awaken within us a series of the most pleasing feelings, and to establish our hearts in habits of gladness and serenity. For this reason he exhibits nature under all her various forms and revolutions in the best light, and seldom allows the fancy a peep of any one thing, which does not either augment our comfort, or some how lessen our hereditary stock of sorrow.

C H A P. VI.

*On the Originality of the Seasons.*

*To such the bounteous Providence of Heav'n,  
In every breast implanting this desire  
Of objects new and strange, to urge us on  
With unremitted labour to pursue  
Those sacred stores that wait the rip'ning soul  
In Truth's exhaustless bosom.——*

WE have attempted in the preceding chapter an imperfect sketch of the leading object to which the *Seasons* of Thomson are chiefly directed. The great and only general effect, which he seems most solicitous to produce in the minds of his readers, is a full acquiescence in the economy, and a filial confidence in the Author of Nature. And he paints every part of the year, and every genial form that wakes, to the plastic energy of poetical enthusiasm, in colours peculiarly adapted to his purpose. He does not satisfy himself, however, with simply arraying the conceptions of others in a dress of his own. This contemptible species of plagiarism, was not more beneath his genius than repugnant to his taste. He had imme-

mediate recourse to nature for all his materials, and she intrusted with confidence her secrets to his care, For however in other respects he should offend against the established dogmas of criticism, his poetry every where discovers the strongest traits of originality. All his ideas, sentiments and versification seem peculiarly his own. There is a beautiful wildness in his numbers, unpolished as they sometimes are ; a manliness and majesty in his language, a decorum and spirit in his images, and a likeness in most of his descriptions, singularly new, inimitable and striking. And what of all others is perhaps the most decisive mark of a poetical mind, the objects he describes, though frequently common and familiar, strike us some how in a new light.

The human system, like every other work of nature, is progressive, and arrives at perfection by imperceptible degrees. We are never thoroughly satisfied in our best acquisitions, the largest prospects stint not our views, the whole range of the senses bound not our desires. Some distant object in every possible position, breaks in upon our rest, fires the heart with new ardour, and pushes onward to new attainments. Wherever we direct our sight or attention, novelty in a thousand forms tempts our wishes and solicits our acquaintance. Thus impelled by a restless and insatiable curiosity, we are  
still

still making new experiments on every thing around us, indulging new feelings from every change that affects us, and accumulating new ideas from whatever comes within the sphere of observation.

How happily does our poet adapt his descriptions to this strange peculiarity in the human system. He never overlooks our love of variety, nor fatigues the attention with a tedious and minute display of one object. He knew in what a constant and curious alternation our best sensations succeed each other, and generally suits them all with delicacy and precision. And his felicity in blending a certain spicery of novelty with nature and truth, through all their various windings and gradations, is extremely uncommon. “*Thomson*, says a writer already quoted, *in that beautiful descriptive poem, the Seasons, pleases by the justness of his painting, but his greatest merit consists in impressing the mind with numberless beauties of nature in her various and successive forms, which formerly passed unheeded.*——”

Inattention, though the worst is perhaps one of the most prevalent habits in the human temper. That suggests insensibility to circumstances and things which tinctures the disposition and manners of most men, not only plunges them into many inconveniences which they might otherwise have escaped, but deprives them of many pleasures which they might otherwise enjoy. The whole aspect of nature

ture is so full of meaning, teems with so many beauties, and exhibits such a vast profusion of unexpected varieties, that every sensation she awakens contributes some how to human happiness. In heaven above, and the earth beneath, still some new object catches the wandering eye, and fills the contemplative mind with a fresh accession of delight. Not a brook that murmurs as it runs, not a breeze that rustles among the branches, not a cow that lows on the plain, not a lamb that bleats and browses on the hill, not a bird that nestles and sings among the bushes, not a sight we see, nor a sound we hear, which addresses not every faculty of the soul and every feeling of the heart, in the simplest, sweetest, most persuasive accents, and which discovers not some new quality, or creates some new sensation.

To Thomson we are greatly indebted for thus employing his descriptive talents in rousing imagination and the heart to that charming glass of novelty which sparkles around us in the sweetest lustre, and sheds a fragrance sufficiently delicious to every sense. His muse in catering for her own pleasure administers to ours. He obviously despises every art, and even poetry itself, but in so far as it contributes to the embellishment, convenience, or comfort of life, and has either an immediate or oblique direction to make men wiser, better and happier. He wished them possessed of all the ease, tranquillity,

lity, and delight which their present condition affords, and to share the bounties of Providence with liberality and gratitude. His constitutional temper, notwithstanding the strongest sensibility, was originally cheerful, he had been long under the tuition of that philosophy that gives its disciples the mastery of themselves, and his poem is every where enriched with the natural ebullitions of a glad heart. To awaken in others a series of sentiments so grateful to his own mind, was no doubt one reason that set him about writing the *Seasons*. And they will last as long as the language, a beautiful monument of benevolence as well as of genius.

There is no dissipating the unthinking languor of stupidity, without producing certain emotions of surprise. And this can only be done in description, by a delicate selection of such circumstances as are best calculated to startle the fancy or strike the heart. All new objects occasion new feelings, and the effect uniformly corresponds with the cause. Whatever regards us with an inimical aspect, awakens painful sensations, but things of a more friendly and generous appearance are accompanied with those of a pleasing and congenial nature. This in all the fine arts is a source of inexhaustible beauty, and feeds imagination with an endless series of the purest and most exquisite delicacies. And the only difference be-

tween vulgar and elegant or enlarged minds is, that the latter have what the former want, a quick instinctive, habitual discernment, not only of every thing that affects them, but of every affection to which they are subject. To this fine principle original writers owe all their distinction. They perceive every object through a medium peculiar to themselves, and are often blamed for their conceptions, with a partiality as barbarous and absurd as that which should instigate us to censure, or rather insult the strong for vanquishing the weak, or the swift for outrunning the slow. Indeed, they have seldom very little merit or demerit, either in the ideas which occupy their minds, or the feelings that agitate their hearts. Fancy is seldom a voluntary agent, but always and every where, as obsequious to the influence of novelty as an orb to the attraction of its sphere. In this light Thomson moves in a circle, and with a dignity and propriety wholly his own. His attachment to rural simplicity and romantic solitude, was early and singular. Scenes, where nature wantons in the wildest irregularity, were homogeneous to his mind. While yet a child he has been known to steal away from his little companions, who sometimes found him strolling all alone among brakes, thickets, the banks of streams, and the sides of hills; which even then seemed possessed  
of

of some secret enchantment, which corresponded to the soft inexplicable movements of his rising genius. From this fauntering and pensive habit he acquired an awkwardness of manner which never forsook him, but secured an intercourse with the essence and arrangement of things, which sufficiently supplied his want of the graces \* with

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\* The following *Ode to Politeness*, occasioned by the present popular system of education, has been printed but not published, and I hope the Reader will not be displeased with seeing it here. My pretensions to versification, however, are not so sanguine, as to subject me to much chagrin from its reprobation. But perhaps this form of address, awkward and imperfect as it is on a subject so much in the *ton*, may yet have a better effect than any other. The truth is, it is nearly as good as I could make it; and though it should be thought very *bad*, it is at least not very *long*.

FIRST born of Truth! to mortals given,  
An honorary guest,  
Propitious progeny of Heaven,  
Still blessing all, and blest!  
O who would not thy presence greet,  
So yielding, affable and sweet?  
All Nature owns thy kind restraints,  
And melts in harmony divine;  
While every savage power relents,  
In holy raptures round thy shrine.

O come,

an uncommon stock of sensibility and science.  
Hence almost every passage in the *Seasons*, how-

---

O come, with meekness in thine eye,  
And kindness on thy tongue ;  
Inspire the old with sympathy,  
With gentleness the young.  
We know thee by thy complaisance,  
Thy classic taste and attic sense.  
These, trust the Muse, are richer things  
Than pride can boast, or power bestow ;  
Too honest for the courts of kings,  
Too homely for the sons of shew.

Sincerity, where'er thou art,  
Like some fair Cherub shines :  
And round the sentimental heart,  
In fond affection twines.  
Philanthropy, serene as even,  
And candour undisguis'd as Heaven ;  
Above suspicion's low surmise,  
Adorn thy mild majestic brow !  
Hail thee ! the wisest of the wise,  
And meekest of the meek below.

Ye comely forms, ye smiling airs,  
Which on the Goddess wait :  
O quash the barb'rous herd of cares,  
Which murder mean and great,  
He cannot harbour low born pride,  
Who has politeness for his guide.  
Ah ! titles are but empty names,  
The tinsel'd drapery of state ;

ever faulty in other respects, is equally replete with novelty and truth. It is well known that

---

All that the rising heart inflames,  
But infamy perceiv'd too late.

Thou, Delicacy, charming maid,  
So seldom to be found;  
Where gaiety in loose parade,  
Her folly scatters round.  
Child of an independent mind,  
Thy votaries full often find,  
Far from the splendid walks of taste,  
Veil'd in the rusty garb of want;  
With many silent woes oppress'd,  
Yet Rudeness never knew thy haunt.

Hail Sensibility! with thee  
The Graces all unite;  
And in one gen'rous aim agree  
To punish awkward spite.  
Come, all such sentiments impart,  
As give expansion to the heart!  
The magic of thy potent spell  
Can well each friendly feeling raise,  
The fiends of dark Detraction quell,  
And give to merit all its praise.

See wealth of all her trapping bare,  
Ambition lower the crest;  
And levity of vacant stare,  
Still more and more unblest!  
Inhuman anger, deadly hate,  
Flush'd vanity of empty gait!

he was accustomed, even after he came to England, engrossed as he then was, by the best com-

---

Poor pique, the scorpion of the heart,  
Dark spleen wrapt up in cloudy care ;  
Disdain with her envenom'd dart,  
Seek all one common fate to share !

Weak man turns all his blifs to gall,  
By knavish artifice ;  
Fair as thou art, thou too must fall,  
A victim to his vice.  
Is not religion thus decreed,  
By lank hypocrisy to bleed ?  
And while, with pestilential eye,  
Envy darts th' insidious glance,  
Who can her pointed stings defy,  
Or hope to be polite by chance.

The empty coxcomb, spruce and prim,  
The testy teasing prude ;  
However choak'd with courtly whim,  
Are every thing but good :  
Though affluence around them roll,  
Still starchness dubs the vulgar soul.  
Internal meanness, what can hide ?  
All gorgeous pageantry of state  
Springs from the littleness of pride,  
Makes worth suspicious, sinks the great.

Can ceremony charm the heart,  
Or flattery always please ?

Who

pany, and familiar with the most shining characters of the age, to disengage himself from them all, and frequent the most sequestered and celebrated spots in the neighbourhood: There, if he felt no new emanations, or imbibed no new conceptions; he could recollect the old at his leisure; wait the happy returns of genius; and catch the delightful afflatus of inspiration. Then he mused and philosophised by turns on every proximate object and circumstance; and seldom left the place till he had reduced the various thoughts and senti-

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Who then but fools would boast on art,  
Which knaves perform with ease?  
See vice her snaky fore-head rear!  
And court the plaudit of a Peer!  
Ah! what an hollow wag is he,  
Stalking gigantic o'er the scene?  
Repeating loud in plausive glee  
The firen song of pleasures Queen:

The Graces, and the Graces still  
Compose his motley tale,  
While poison from his luscious quill  
Our frantic youth inhale.  
Whatever meets his putrid breath,  
Is petrifi'd with instant death!  
Behold how blushing Beauty mourns,  
While Female Virtue hangs her head!  
The free born Muse indignant spurns,  
And reprobates the ruffian Deed.

ments it suggested to a regular consistency, if not to complete verification. His mornings and evenings, especially in composing the *Seasons*, were generally spent in this manner. And to the resolute and manly preference of such innocent and rational amusements he owes most of his fame. For this first and best of all his poems derives its chief popularity, not so much from the justness, of which few are competent judges, as from the beautiful novelty of his painting, of which all are sensible.

One would imagine the subject of the *Seasons*, at first view, not the most susceptible of invention. But what is it a truly original genius will not improve. Every thing is prolific of novelty in the hand of a Master. His ideas are not the crude conceptions of dulness, nor his sentiments either the vapid yawning of a listless, or the insignificant prattle of an empty heart. He generally plans intirely for himself, and always executes in a manner preceded by nothing similar. The light he strikes out is so singular, and withal so true, that we are equally pleased with what we never saw before, and surpris'd that we now only see it for the first time. Who, for example, till Virgil appeared, expected to find the fable of the *Iliad* capable of being thus beautifully diversified with new elegance and truth. In like manner the metamorphoses of Nature, through all the different stages of excellence, takes place—

place—one animal assumes the form of another; the acorn starts up into a full grown tree, and the inanimate creation, though apparently perfect, is in a state of perpetual revolution and vicissitude.—

In descriptive poetry, as in landscape-painting, fancy has the fullest scope. Here, however, fiction does not consist in feigning objects unknown to the senses, but in embellishing them with colours, endowing them with qualities, connecting them by relations, and disposing them in attitudes and groupes of which we have little or no acquaintance. In truth, ideal arrangements are endless. While our affections retain their usual aversion to uniformity, the multifarious objects of our respective senses and faculties must unavoidably admit of new combinations. This, like every other art, improves by practice. For the more a fertile imagination creates or fabricates, the exercise becomes the easier, new veins of verisimilitude are disclosed, and we may give over for want of patience or strength, but not of materials. The human genius is so versatile, and the original sources of beauty so inexhaustible, that every new inspection of the most common and familiar phenomena of nature, discover a thousand new variations, distinctions and resemblances, at the same time that it opens up a multiplicity of avenues, where novelty wantons in all her charms, where science displays her happiest attractions,

attractions, where fancy is feasted, and the heart in transport. Such is the situation in which Thomson shines, and sheds a lustre around him, which few imitators of the same simple and genuine original have hitherto surpassed. And it has been affirmed in my hearing, by some in whose judgment I have the fullest confidence, and whose profession and science give them a right to speak decisively, that the pieces of *Poussin* are not more uncommon, exotic, and classical, the sketches of *Lorenes* more daring and sublime, or the descriptions of *Titian* more happy, natural, graceful, varied and charming, than his. So that to a reader of taste, who can relish nature in her rudest as well as in her most polished and splendid shapes, it is hardly possible to mention a poem of the same extent that will furnish him with as much novelty, or better reward a perusal.—

It is not easy to conceive for what reason, but our critics in general, with all their drowsy and laborious commentaries, have been very sparing in their attentions to Thomson. The neglect, it may be thought, is the less injurious, that those they have buried amidst the greatest piles of literature, are commonly the least read. One however, and and not the least eminent of his cotemporaries, mentions the Author of the *Seasons* in terms so proper and polite, that I know not how to illustrate this  
part

part of the subject better than by transcribing what he says——

“ Thomson was blessed with a strong and copious fancy; he hath enriched poetry with a variety of new and original images, which he painted from nature itself, and from his own actual observations: his descriptions have therefore a distinctness and truth, which are utterly wanting to those, of poets who have only copied from each other, and have never looked abroad on the objects themselves. Thomson was accustomed to wander away into the country for days and for weeks, attentive to, “ each rural sight, each rural sound;” while many a poet who has dwelt for years in the Strand, has attempted to describe fields and rivers, and generally succeeded accordingly. Hence that nauseous repetition of the same circumstances; hence that disgusting impropriety of introducing what may be called a set of hereditary images, without proper regard to the age, or climate, or occasion in which they were formerly used. Though the diction of the *Seasons* is sometimes harsh and inharmonious, and sometimes turgid and obscure, and though in many instances, the numbers are not sufficiently diversified by different pauses, yet is this poem on the whole, from the numberless strokes of nature in which it a-

“ bounds, one of the most captivating and amu  
 “ sing in our language, and which, as its beauties  
 “ are not of a transitory kind, as depending on  
 “ particular customs and manners, will ever be  
 “ perused with delight. The scenes of Thomson  
 “ are frequently as wild and romantic as those of  
 “ Salvator Rosa, varied with precipices and tor-  
 “ rents, and “ castled cliffs,” and deep vallies, with  
 “ piny mountains, and the gloomiest caverns. In-  
 “ numberable are the little circumstances in his  
 “ descriptions, totally unobserved by all his prede-  
 “ cessors. What poet hath ever taken notice of  
 “ the leaf, that towards the end of autumn,

Incessant rustles from the mournful grove,  
 Oft startling such as, studious, walk below,  
 And slowly circles through the waving air?

“ Or who, in speaking of a summer evening, hath  
 “ ever mentioned,

The quail that clamours for his running mate?

“ Or the following natural image at the same time  
 “ of the year?

Wide o’er the thiftly lawn, as swells the breeze,  
 A whitening shower of vegetable down

Amusive floats. — — — — —

“ In

“ In what other poet, do we find the silence and  
“ expectation that precedes an April shower in-  
“ fisted on.

The stealing shower is scarce to patter heard,  
By such as wander through the forest walks,  
Beneath th’ umbrageous multitude of leaves.

“ How full, particular and picturesque is this as-  
“ semblage of circumstances that attend a very  
“ keen frost in a night of winter!

Loud rings the frozen earth, and hard reflects  
A double noise; while at his evening watch  
The village dog deters the nightly thief;  
The heifer lows; the distant water-fall  
Swells in the breeze; and with the hasty tread  
Of traveller, the hollow-sounding plain  
Shakes from afar. — — —

“ In no one subject are common writers more con-  
“ fused and unmeaning, than in their descriptions  
“ of rivers, which are generally said only to wind  
“ and to murmur, while their qualities and courses  
“ are seldom accurately marked. Examine the  
“ exactness of the ensuing description, and con-  
“ sider what a perfect idea it communicates to the  
“ mind.

184      *On the Originality of the Seasons.*

Around th' adjoining brook, that purls along  
The vocal grove, now fretting o'er a rock,  
Now scarcely moving through a reedy pool,  
Now starting to a sudden stream, and now  
Gently diffus'd into a limpid plain;  
A various groupe the herds and flocks compose,  
Rural confusion ! — — — — —

“ A groupe worthy the pencil of Giacomo da  
“ Bassano, and so minutely delineated, that he  
“ might have worked from this sketch ;

— — — — — On the grassy bank  
Some ruminating lie ; while others stand  
Half in the flood, and often bending sip  
The circling surface. — — — — —

“ He adds, that the ox in the middle of them,

— — — — — From his sides  
The troublous insects lashes, to his sides  
Returning still. — — — — —

“ A natural circumstance, that to the best of my  
“ remembrance hath escaped even the natural  
“ Theocritus. Nor do I recollect that any poet  
“ hath been struck with the murmurs of the num-  
“ berless insects, that swarm abroad at the noon of  
“ summer's

“ summer’s day; as attendants of the evening in-  
“ deed, they have been mentioned;

Refounds the living surface of the ground :  
Nor undelightful is the ceaseless hum  
To him who muses through the woods at noon ;  
Or drowsy shepherd, as he lies reclin’d  
With half-shut eyes. — — —

“ But the novelty and nature we admire in the de-  
“ scriptions of Thomson are by no means his only  
“ excellencies; he is equally to be praised, for im-  
“ pressing on our minds the effects, which the scene  
“ delineated would have on the present spectator  
“ or hearer. Thus having spoken of the roaring  
“ of the savages in a wilderness of Africa, he in-  
“ troduces a captive, who, though just escaped  
“ from prison and slavery under the tyrant of Mo-  
“ rocco, is so terrified and astonished at the dread-  
“ ful uproar, that

The wretch half wishes for his bonds again.

“ Thus also having described a caravan lost and  
“ overwhelmed in one of those whirlwinds that so  
“ frequently agitate and lift up the whole sands of  
“ the desert, he finishes his picture by adding that,

— — — In Cairo’s crouded streets,  
Th’ impatient merchant, wondering waits in vain,  
And Mecca saddens at the long delay.

And

“ And thus, lastly, in describing the pestilence  
 “ that destroyed the British troops at the siege of  
 “ Carthage, he has used a circumstance inimi-  
 “ tably lively, picturesque, and striking to the  
 “ imagination; for he says that the Admiral not  
 “ only heard the groans of the sick that echoed  
 “ from ship to ship, but that he also pensively  
 “ stood, and listened at midnight to the dashing  
 “ of the waters, occasioned by throwing the dead  
 “ bodies into the sea;

Heard, nightly, plung'd into the sullen waves,  
 The frequent corse. —————

“ A minute and particular enumeration of circum-  
 “ stances judiciously selected, is what chiefly dis-  
 “ criminate poetry from history, and renders the  
 “ former, for that reason, a more close and faith-  
 “ ful representation of nature than the latter. And  
 “ if our poets would accustom themselves to con-  
 “ template fully every object, before they at-  
 “ tempted to describe it, they would not fail of  
 “ giving their readers more new and more com-  
 “ plete images than they generally do.

“ These observations on Thomson, which  
 “ however would not have been so large, *if there*  
 “ *had been already any considerable criticism on*  
 “ *his*

“ *his character*, might be still augmented by an  
“ examination and developement of the beauties  
“ in the loves of the birds in Spring,——a view  
“ of the torrid zone in Summer,——the rise of  
“ fountains and rivers in Autumn,——a man pe-  
“ rishing in the snows in Winter,——the wolves  
“ descending from the Alps,——and a view of  
“ winter within the polar circle, which are all of  
“ them highly-finished originals.”

## C H A P. VII.

*On the Pathetic of the Seasons.*

*Nor be thy generous indignation check'd,  
 Nor check'd the tender tear to misery given,  
 From guilt's contagious power shall that protect;  
 This soften and refine the soul for heaven.*

THE tender passions may well be called the seasoning or salt of life. They heighten considerably whatever we possess, and impart an edge and delicacy to all our pleasures. Without them society were every where equally insipid and dreary. From these the fictions of imagination derive their liveliest colouring, and all the flutterings of the pensive heart their sweetest and loftiest tones. They are the sun that enlightens and warms, the gales that fan, the dews that soften, and the streams that water and refresh the intellectual world. To the vivacity they occasion, and the sensations they cherish, we owe whatever charms in youth or pleases in age, touches the fancy or soothes the affections. Nothing in truth affords any solid endearment which does not interest, absorb, or deeply agitate the mind. Indifference is the habit or passion of the dull, unthinking

ing, or dissolute. For all who have any heart, measure their existence only by their attachments, and seem to think every moment of life insignificant which yields not less or more of this favourite enjoyment. Happy they whose emotions of freindship have but few intervals, whose hearts and lives are seldom torn and imbittered with a suspension of the most elegant sensations that can be felt: on whose hallowed peace and refinement of mind, the clamorous protestations of fools, and the hollow impertinent rodomantade of piddling pretenders to generosity never intrude. But this amiable and interesting image of human felicity, in which so many of the chastest sensibilities and sweetest beatitudes are united, is not to be expected in the absence of so much perfection as still adheres to our best connections, though its beautiful correspondence, to all that is valuable in our natures, is no equivocal presumption, that we may yet hope to obtain it from some future period and some happier clime.

Sensibility is not a mere constitutional, propensity, but as much a virtue perhaps, as it depends as much on culture as any other of our dispositions does. It takes its vigour, complexion and tendency from temper indeed. But temper is the child of education. What is character but a picture of the heart, or the heart but the offspring of  
of

of indulgence. To check its first and tenderest emotions, is to blast the earliest and sweetest indications of humanity. The plant that vegetates with most freedom must disclose the richest beauty. Nature prospers under no improvement that represses her ardour. The opening mind cannot be too soon made acquainted with the suffering lot of humanity. False conceptions of the world, not seasonably corrected, blind the understanding, blunt the affections, and benumb the heart. Contemplate steadily and seriously the magical scenes of life, and be your temper ever so flegmatic you cannot remain insensible to the sweet accessions of compassion. Objects of distress are formed to operate on the mind mechanically. Yet we soften, at the touch of misery, with a pleasure not so much resembling what we feel in the discharge of animal functions, as that which accompanies the performance of our most important obligations. And nothing smothers these generous emotions so effectually as that pitiful system of selfishness which seems the most conspicuous characteristic of modern manners. We are generally dazzled and deluded with the splendour of society, before we know any thing of individuals. The suffering part of mankind are unavoidably overlooked in that fulsome glitter which constantly results from an indiscriminate  
aspect

aspect of things. Youth absorbs our affections too much in a thousand tender and evanescent anxieties to permit our sharing in sorrows which we have no opportunity of knowing. Whatever we then see or hear, awakens the passions of emulation and pride; and that mind seldom feels which wishes only to shine. The glaring blaze of luxury is an intoxicating sight at a distance. Alas! it petrifies instead of dilating the heart. The luster is gay and sparkling, but operates with a secret malignity; which, like many other things in the present circle of enchantment and fascination, is fatal in proportion as it charms. We enter on the world with our hopes fixed on a certain object, which insensibly becomes dearer to us than life. This naturally engrosses all our powers of contrivance and acquisition. And many are the flattering motives which then impel us to realize the figure of a heated imagination. The poor fluttering heart dances with extasy and joy in the prospect of so much finery and shew, and grasps at the tremulous vapour with a frantic enthusiast. But surely we are never less susceptible of that improvement which terminates in true worth and permanent felicity, then when most attached to levity and madness. Hence we seldom meet with a feeling heart in a very sanguine constitution. The robust

bust and healthy discover but little sensibility, while some minds seem of too delicate a texture for any system of organs whatever. The most exquisite sentiments, and the best feelings, are often found in conjunction with the weakest bodies; just as the softest vibrations of music are commonly the most affecting. This by the way, is one reason why want of health in youth so frequently produces fullness of virtue in age; and that few, who are then very sickly, do not also turn out very worthy. Early sufferings mellow their natures, chastise their passions, abate their fondness for life, quash the petulance of imaginary excellence, inspire a thousand delicacies of affection, and season the heart with tenderness. It is thus that the frowns of adversity produce habits of humanity, and impregnate the coldest tempers with a glow of sensibility, to which those of a warmer complexion, under a discipline less severe, are generally strangers. The crosses of life improve by retrenching our enjoyments, moderate our expectations, give the heart a mortal disgust to all the gaudy blandishments of sense, and fill our minds with sensations and desires to which nothing of all that lives and rots within the hemisphere is adequate. The fleeting and fugitive objects, around us, are then seen and contemplated in their own colours.

The

The world appears no longer, that delicious paradise which the giddy and the vicious describe. No: the pale hand of sorrow robs the gay creation of every fictitious embellishment, disintangles the heart from those luscious gulphs of luxury, into which it frequently plunges, dissolves the bewitching charm of pleasure, and destroys the captivating powers of applause.

It deserves to be added, that such a fine fund of sensibility is generally prolific of every virtue, that can exalt the nature or enoble the manners of man. How amiable the temper that discovers it most, and the character of which it is the foundation. He views not his inferiors in the gifts of nature, or distinctions, of fortune, with supercilious indifference or pragmatrical contempt. His generosity is the genuine effect of habit and principle, not of impulse and pride; and none of those on whom he confers his obligations, ever feel the debt of gratitude oppressive. He does not prostitute the sacred professions of esteem to gratify the selfish cravings of an inflated heart, but pursues with steadiness and modesty the beauteous and pleasing prescriptions of a mind awake to the best and purest emotions. When even justly offended, the least appearance of a relenting spirit softens him into forgiveness, and he possesses the singular magnanimity of

O

wishing

wishing well to the worst, as well as the worthiest, of all mankind. The sooner he indulges those dispositions, he bids the fairer to escape that savage sternness of temper and effeminate virulence of soul, to which the proud and phlegmatic are so rigidly addicted. Indeed, there is the same connection between youth without feeling and age without virtue, as between a barren spring and a scanty harvest. Humanity seldom adorns the conclusion of that life, which begins not with tenderness. What is benevolence, but all the softer and finer affections, under the management and discipline of principle? And such as are strangers to these emotions when young, can hardly be thought susceptible of them when old.

One principal purpose of true poetry, is to heighten this mental harmony, and by uttering the ideas of the understanding, in perfect consonance with the feelings of the heart, to abate the prevailing asperity of our natures and improve our habits of sympathy. The *Muses* on such a kind embassy, not only charm imagination by the magic of their voice, but touch the nicest springs in the human constitution with taste and delicacy. There is a key in every sort of composition to which we are always in tune, but as difficult to hit, as productive of the best effects

effects when it is. How long shall we regret, that so few have the talent of speaking or writing to the heart. The easiest elegance in conjunction, with the happiest elocution, is yet frequently destitute of this singular excellence. We meet with a thousand authors extremely plausible, who have a knack at saying the most agreeable things in the prettiest manner, but read them only with such placid emotions as objects in still life produce. The distinction between the beautiful and pathetic in writing, as in nature, however imperceptible to the vulgar, is peculiarly palpable to persons of true taste. A landscape happily varied with verdant fields, flowery meads, extensive plains, browsing flocks, winding riviulets, rural cottages, and adjacent woods, is vastly pleasing, but the warbling of birds in all its native wildness and delicious vivacity, greatly heightens our sensations. And in the gloom of night especially, when we happen to saunter abroad and abandon our minds to all the suggestions of darkness, solitude and silence, while the nightingale attracts our attention with a thousand plaintive and accordant tones; the heart instinctively swells with pity and our eyes are filled with tears. We are much entertained with the sight of a fine sheet of water, or a sweetly winding stream, but deeply affected by the ra-

pidity of a majestic river, or the tumult of the ocean in a storm. Nature in bloom is a beauteous and delightful spectacle, but we seldom attend to the stems of rising plants, in particular without feeling something uncommonly delicate and tender. In short, we gaze with rapture on some faces exquisitely polished, while others without any thing superior in complexion or features, are yet possessed of attractions infinitely more exquisite and irresistible. So that the heart is often melted by something, both in real and fictitious pictures, which all the philosophy in the world can never sufficiently analyse.

The genuine pathetic then consists not either in fertility of thinking, or facility of speaking, in luxury of imagination, or volubility of tongue, but in a certain edge of thought and a peculiar form of expression. Such are the true tones of sensibility, to which the whole cordage of the heart are *tremblingly alive*, with which all our sweetest sensations are in perfect unison, and which thrill with extacy through every feeling in the human frame. How much, for example, do we read about the workings of the noblest affections in novels, and some graver, though not less silly compositions, without feeling one tincture of the ardour recommended. Is not friendship often described with the most elaborate minuteness, and in language equally flowery and  
romantic,

romantic, while the heart seems as totally excluded as if it had no natural concern in the subject. Many of the finest things, to be sure, are then thrown out, and much artificial elegance displayed, yet were it not for the obvious and disgusting affectation of being thought wonderfully pathetic, one would imagine it could hardly have been thus fully avoided without a great deal of pains. Writers of this class, however, are not always without genius, but it is a flash that dazzles, not a flame that warms; the blaze of a meteor, not the light of the sun; the exuberance of a frothy imagination, not the emanations of a sentimental mind. They mistake the partialities of a capricious for the delicacies of a sympathetic temper, declaim with much unmeaning earnestness on the workings of generosity, at the same time that the most splendid assemblage of vocables conceals not their want of humanity, and place a mighty emphasis on a tenderness of affection which they never felt, nor can feel, and with a presumption as contemptible in literature as in life, are eternally substituting the little for the great, a fine instead of a feeling description, the petty palpitation of a vain for the manly ebullitions of a liberal heart.

THERE is not any thing so characteristic of Thomson's genius, as a happy facility in rendering

most of his descriptions sentimental and interesting. Wherever he sings or soars, he still possesses a singular command of the passions, and maintains unshaken the empire of the heart. His adaption of natural objects for awakening the tenderest emotions, how happy and original.—He indulges every feeling congenial to the mind, wherever he supposes her; attentive, as he always is, to the various scenes and vicissitudes of nature.—He renders whatever comes in his way peculiarly interesting, by making it an occasion of suggesting some useful hint of morality.—He never fails to sympathize with the sufferings of our fellow-creatures, and seems to consider them as sharers in our own calamities.—And dry as the subject might appear to barren minds, under his cultivation, do not the *Seasons* teem with variety of the most emphatic and melting images of human distress.

I. THE associations of ideas, however mysterious, is a very common operation of mind. How many things are constantly recollected by the suggestion of others, between which, in our apprehension, there is not either the most distant alliance or similitude? To these extraneous ideas, our understandings are open, only in proportion as we feel with keenness, and conceive with facility. And here, like objects of insignificance in common life,  
a few

a few only have novelty enough to attract attention. Our Poet makes the best use of this principle for enriching his work, and impressing his reader. He takes great delight in selecting such circumstances as have the strongest affinity with many of our dearest concerns. These, he knew, would always have a fine and lasting effect on the best minds. For the memory seems a constant attendant on imagination. As the one roves through a thousand regions of her own creating, the other seizes the most latent and hidden features of resemblance, in recalling scenes long forgotten, and renewing impressions almost effaced. Every thing he wrote shews how sensibly his own heart was affected in such situations. He had sensibilities which humanely echoed to every querulous tone in the whole of nature's sympathetic scale. And his manly soul is every where so susceptible of all the softer feelings, that he generally foregoes the aid of imagination whenever a tender idea comes across him.

What spring is in the vegetable, that is youth in the animal and moral world? Trees in bloom, plants shooting forth their stems, the rising herbage, the earth mantled in green, and the woods, the fields, and the streams resuming their wonted harmony, occasion the sweetest recollections, and put us in mind of a period that must continue dear to our latest remembrance. I never mix with young

people, but my heart relaxes into joy. I then consider myself as in the midst of some flowery parterre, where every thing around me is still lively, beautiful and flourishing. On such occasions, and not without some involuntary sighs, as well as a few tears, for which another would have blushed, I have sometimes catched myself repeating the poet's words.

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Then nature all  
Wears to the lover's eye a look of love ;  
And all the tumult of a guilty world  
Toss'd by ungen'rous passions,—*sinks away.*

Thomson in the whole of his poem had not such another opportunity as this of introducing the subject of *love*. And his description discovers all the ardour and impetuosity of one who had early felt its force. But how different his account of this interesting propensity of the human heart, from the brutish impulse of the dissolute, the pitiful, sneaking *manœuvres* of the mercenary and interested, the flippant and clamorous protestation of the vain, the vulgar and the vile? His are the delicate exchanges and refinements of mutual purity, fidelity, and esteem. In this elegant commerce, he well knew, the world has no concern. And he had those only in his eye, who are neither chilled by its  

3

breath,

breath, nor debauched by its maxims. He supposes them full of innocence and tranquillity, but all alive to the generous emotions of a chaste desire, and possessed of every sensibility that can take fire at a kindred flame. How soft, insinuating, and forcible the language in which he traces and delineates the principal progress and consequences of a noble, permanent, and reciprocal attachment, but how mysterious and unmeaning to the sons and daughters of interest and ambition? Ye slaves of opinion and parade, doomed as ye are, like pictures in an exhibition, to scenes of perpetual ostentation and exposure, where every fool gratifies his impertinent curiosity at your expence! little do ye know for what a world of insignificance, you thus relinquish the delicious endearments of the heart! But, high as you now soar in these aerial mansions of imaginary elevation and chimerical enjoyment, you are only regarded by the modest and worthy with a look of anxiety and a tear of concern. - Amidst the vast profusion of luxury and vice, which at present overwhelm society, what is marriage for the most part but an outrageous insult on reason and nature? How often do an union of circumstances, take place, between those of the most heterogeneous and irreconcilable tempers? And the strongest artificial ties are then but a slender cement, to a match so explicitly reprobated by nature. When the sexes  
come

come together in this manner, and on no higher principles than mere partners in the common affairs of business; they may honour it by what appellation they please, but it is in fact nothing more than a state of legal prostitution. It is plain, at least, that they surrender every thing to each other but their hearts: and, without their hearts, what in the eyes of God or man can sanctify their choice? Alas! the infatuation of custom is now as epidemical as it is pernicious. We have got, as it should seem, into some magical circle, which whirls about with such rapidity, as leaves us but little leisure, to reflect! The delusion increases in proportion as we gaze on the fleeting apparatus that every where bursts on our senses, and all is enchantment around us. Giddy with the constant glare and vicissitude of this dazzling, distracting, visionary scene, frantic with the madness it inspires, and moulded by the fashions it adopts, we substitute art for nature, convenience for reason, and prudence for *love*. Thus our youth are bought and sold, or flung into one another's arms as it were by random, merely to answer the capricious unprincipled purposes of parents; who, by the righteous appointment of Providence, often live to witness the melancholy and shocking consequences of such inhuman arbitrary bargains. Thomson took not his cue from such a petrifying system. It was not the cautious, covetous, creeping con-  
ceptions

ceptions of a *Jew*, but the liberal genius of unperverted nature that inspired him. And to you who have passed the beginning of your days in the calm recesses of retirement, and imbibed at your leisure, from an innocent correspondence with birds and bushes, that chaste sensibility, which may well be called the rudiments of *love*, his song must be equally full of tenderness and meaning. Indeed, his fluttering heart is the only thing we see or feel through the whole description. How judicious and apposite the hints he suggests, how generous and seasonable the caution he subjoins? With what fraternal tenderness and manly delicacy, does he apprize his fair sisters of their dangerous situation, under the delirium of youth and the influence of *love*? Nor are his just invectives against those of his own sex, who practise the diabolical arts of seduction, the less poignant for their oblique direction.

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Ah then, ye fair!

Be greatly cautious of your sliding hearts:

Dare not th' infectious sigh; the pleading look,

Downcast, and low, in meek submission dress'd,

But full of guile. Let not the fervent tongue

Prompt to deceive with adulation smooth,

Gain on your purpos'd will. Nor in the *bower*

Where woodbuds flaunt, and roses shed a couch,

While evening draws her crimson curtains round,

Trust your soft minutes with *betraying man*.

Many

Many and well depicted in the subsequent verses are the mad excesses of intemperate *love*. How often does it not unhinge the most enlightened and philosophic minds. What need we mention the commanders of armies and empires; the sternest tyrant that ever wielded the sceptre of oppression has felt its enervating influence. History is replete with characters, otherwise the most inexceptionable and illustrious, who have liberally bled in its cause, and shamefull expired on its altar. Alas! that its cruellest ravages should be so generally among the best and worthiest of both sexes. Many, indeed, are so fashioned by nature, or benumbed by art, as to be affected by nothing; and such as are touched most by trifles, are seldom susceptible of more forcible emotions. The selfish, the prudish, and the austere, are often proof against the accesses of almost any desire that in the least interferes with the passion to which they are most addicted. They mistake apathy for continence, coolness for chastity, or pride for principle. Extravagancies of this kind are mostly confined to those of warm constitutions, open tempers and strong feelings. And surely the most striking spectacle of delicate distress is a young person frantic or languishing under the pangs, anxieties and disappointments of a hopeless passion. The Maria of *Sterne*, ah! what a picture of all that is tender and moving in nature? And I could relate  
a similar

a similar story from real life, of one of the best and sweetest minds that ever animated a human form. Some by feeling without principle, and living without restraint, discover the most flagitious and profligate dispositions. And they whose intentions are thus habitually criminal, deservedly suffer unmitigated punishment. But there are not wanting others, who, without any uncommon debility of mind or depravity of heart, by a sudden shock of temptation, or the seductions of villainy, have, in one moment, been robbed of their character, and lost their comfort. And well may the species blush for want of humanity, whenever such a case transpires. It would then seem, as if one wretch were materially served by the mortification, and exulted in the ruin of another. The native ghastliness of vice is never so apparent, as in her hollow triumph over fallen or degraded worth. How slyly and securely does the shocking tale circulate underground. The poor unfortunate delinquents are so universally detested and avoided, and truth and falsehood so artfully blended in their indictment, that whatever they may incline, their vindication is utterly and for ever precluded. Every thing that can mitigate the accusation is carefully suppressed, while a thousand aggravating circumstances are fabricated, dilated with minuteness, and magnified with acrimony. In such a state of reprobation,  
what

what shall they do? from what quarter supplicate mercy? or whether look for redress? Where are the bowels to pity, the hands to relieve, or the arms to receive them? The whole aspect of nature appears to them peculiarly dark, menacing, and gloomy. Horrors seize their hearts, and perplexities swell their apprehensions. From friends they meet with resentment and contempt, instead of sympathy and condolence. To the worthy of every sex, character, and condition, they have now no access, but are every where surrounded with inevitable destruction. Thus abandoned of earth and heaven in the midst of society, they pine in solitude, perhaps starve for want, and not unfrequently die in despair. Sometimes publick prostitution is adapted, merely as a temporary expedient from immediate ruin, which, for the most part, is much too formidable a prospect for human nature in the bloom of youth. And how few have the resolution to be virtuous under an imputation of guilt? What a pity the world is so much addicted to believe the worst? For though detraction, like a ball of snow, gathers in size and appearance as it rolls along from one to another, it were easily melted into nothing by the seasonable gleams of a warm benevolent heart. How fatal and pestilential, in more senses than one, is the putrid breath of mortals to many  
of

of the most deserving, though least fortunate of their fellow-creatures ?

II. Many things combine to render the morality of the *Seasons* affecting. The subject itself seems not the most favourable to such a design, or at least but little calculated for inspiring such reflections. And hints of this kind, at a time, or in a place so little expected, derive additional beauty and propriety from their locality and novelty. Indeed there is no situation in which the human heart has not a very sensible satisfaction in being thus reminded of its dearest concerns. But, when deeply engrossed by indifferent matters, and abandoned to other pleasures of less consequence, an oblique reference to the various essentials of life, is a tacit and pleasing proof, that the great affairs of the moral world is still an object of providential attention.

It is the duty of every man, who feels himself capable of doing something, to set out on the plan most consonant to his own genius and prospect of success. Even in this line, the utmost exertions will still be found indispensable. But these will justify him in his own mind, whatever should be the consequence. There is a voice within us, which sanctifies every good intention, and which often whispers peace, when nothing is to be heard  
from

from the world, but the sarcastic sneer of rudeness; from benefactors, but the menacing tone of reprobation; from pretended friends, but officiousness without sincerity, and protestations without meaning.

Yet though successful, will the toil delight.

is therefore a good motto for every worthy undertaking. The opinion of the world may often mislead us, but we can never be wrong in doing that which our own hearts tell us is right.

Thomson's apostrophe to heat is extremely natural and well supported, but we mention it here chiefly for the beautiful and affecting reflections that concludes it. How finely was his genius calculated for dwelling on whatever relates to the workings of the heart, or has the most distant resemblance to the more tender and interesting scenes of life? The leading ideas may perhaps be thought too similar to constitute a regular comparison, but the whole passage is emphatical and expressive.

All-conquering *Heat*, O interrupt thy wrath!

And on my throbbing temples patent thus

Beam not so fierce! Incessant still you flow

And still another fervent flood succeeds,

Pour'd on the head profuse. In vain I sigh,

And restless turn and look around for night;

Night

Night is far off, and hotter hours approach.  
Thrice happy he! who on the sunless side  
Of a romantic mountain; forest crown'd,  
Beneath the whole collected shade reclines:  
Or in the gelid caverns, woodbine wrought,  
And fresh bedew'd with ever-spouting streams,  
Sits coolly calm, while all the world without  
Unsatisfied and sick tosses in noon.  
Emblem instructive of *the virtuous man,*  
*Who keeps his temper'd mind serene and pure,*  
*And every passion aptly harmonized*  
*Amid a jarring world with vice inflam'd.*

He admits a notion, common alike to almost all his brother poets and philosophers, that the circumambient air swarms as much with spiritual, as the earth with corporeal inhabitants. But what a chaste and happy vein of sentimental morality heightens his ideas of the subject, at the same time that he reprobates the many vulgar superstitions it occasions. The scene, at least, is finely conceived, and the introduction of his aerial beings could hardly be more in character.

Shook sudden from the bosom of the sky,  
A thousand shapes or glide athwart the dusk,  
Or stalk majestic on. Deep-rous'd, I feel  
A sacred terror, a severe delight,  
Creep thro' my mortal frame; and thus, methinks,  
P A voice

A voice, than human more, th' abstracted ear  
 Of fancy strikes. " Be not of us afraid,  
 " Poor kindred Men! thy fellow-creatures, we  
 " From the same Parent-Power our beings drew,  
 " The same our Lord, and laws, and great pursuit.  
 " Once some of us, like thee, thro' stormy life,  
 " Toil'd, tempest-beaten, ere we could attain  
 " This holy calm, this harmony of mind,  
 " Where purity and peace immingle charms.  
 " Then fear not us; but with responsive song,  
 " Amid these dim recesses, undisturb'd  
 " By noisy folly, and discordant vice,  
 " Of Nature sing with us, and Nature's God.  
 " Here frequent, at the visionary hour,  
 " When musing midnight reigns or silent noon,  
 " Angelic harps are in full concert heard,  
 " And voices chaunting from the wood-crown'd hill,  
 " The deepening dale, or inmost sylvan glade:  
 " A privilege bestow'd by us, alone,  
 " On Contemplation, or the hallow'd ear  
 " Of Poet, swelling to seraphic strain."

What a grateful turn is given to the following description. It is a well-known fact in natural history, that the plumage of birds is infinitely more splendid and beautiful in the torrid than the temperate regions. And the heart of man is but too apt to undervalue blessings in possession, when put in competition with such as are out of his reach.

Our poet, therefore, takes care to remind his readers,

ders; that the fine feathers of these foreign birds is all the merit they can boast, and that though our eyes are not so frequently dazzled with glaring colours, our ears are more exquisitely charmed with the sweetest sounds. So that he would have us neither inattentive to our own advantages, nor invidious of such as are enjoyed by others. How endearing and lovely is poetry, when thus employed to moderate our wishes and desires, to reconcile us to the dispositions of Providence, and to quash the growling of impatience with sentiments of resignation and acknowledgment.

Wide o'er the winding umbrage of the floods,  
Like vivid blossoms glowing from afar,  
Thick-swarm the brighter birds. For Nature's hand,  
That with a sportive vanity has deck'd  
The plummy nations, there her gayest hues  
Profusely pours. But, if she bids them shine,  
Array'd in all the beauteous beams of day,  
Yet frugal still, she humbles them in song.  
Nor envy we the gaudy robes they lent  
Proud *Montezuma's* realm, whose legions cast  
A boundless radiance waving on the sun,  
*While Philomel is ours; while in our shades,*  
*Thro' the soft silence of the listening night,*  
*The sober-suited songstress trills her lay.*

To the same grateful and worthy purpose he improves the sequel of a thunder-storm. In this, as

in many other instances, what an amazing insight does he discover into all the secret movements of the heart. Strong emotions of terror are invariably succeeded by those of gratitude; for the mind, in most cases, no sooner recovers from apprehensions of danger, than she mechanically relaxes into joy.

'Tis beauty all, and grateful song around,  
 Join'd to the low of kine, and numerous bleat  
 Of flocks thick nibbling thro' the clover'd vale.  
 And shall the hymn be marr'd by *thankless man*,  
*Most favour'd; who with voice articulate*  
*Should lead the chorus of this lower world?*  
*Shall he so soon forgetful of the hand*  
*That hushed the thunder and serenest the sky,*  
*Extinguished feel that spark the tempest wak'd,*  
*That sense of powers exceeding far his own,*  
*Ere yet his feeble heart has lost its fears.*

Having complimented his country, or pronounced her eulogy with all the ardour of true patriotism, his generous invocation on her behalf is a new demonstration how steadily and zealously he prosecuted the great designs of benevolence. The virtuous reader must be highly delighted to find him, on all occasions, so punctual in his acknowledgments to Heaven for every blessing that can be of service to society. His scale of public virtues, how happy, how natural, how complete!

The

The passage rises into a climax equally beautiful and just. And he personifies the several *virtues* for the sake of variety, and to give his account of them that vivacity, manliness, and propriety, without which, it must have been languid and spiritless. But his distinguishing excellence is, that all his conceptions are perfect and distinct. He constantly imparts the most particular and characteristic ideas of the subject. And in this the true philosophy of poetry as well as of history and painting consists. Our desire of knowledge, whether original or acquired, continues inseparable from all our observations on men or things. Hence indiscriminate objects are never agreeable, because they afford no exercise to our inquisitive faculties. And we are so made, as to receive delight from nothing, which does not one way or other, contribute to our improvement. Thus pleasure and utility are in the order of nature constantly united, and every attempt to disjoin them, in theory or practice, in art or life, is a palpable violation of her laws. In the lines to which we refer the diction, as usual, is bold and nervous, the numbers chaste and regularly varied, and all the objects respectively marked by a scrupulous delineation of their specific qualities.

O Thou ! by whose almighty *Nod* the scale  
Of empire rises, or alternate falls,

Send forth the saving VIRTUES round the land,  
 In bright patrol : white *Peace*, and social *Love* ;  
 The tender-looking *Charity*, intent,  
 On gentle deeds, and shedding tears thro' smiles ;  
 Undaunted *Truth*, and *Dignity* of mind ;  
*Courage* compos'd, and keen ; sound *Temperance*,  
 Healthful in heart and look ; clear *Chastity*,  
 With blushes reddening as she moves along,  
 Disordered at the deep regard she draws ;  
 Rough *Industry* ; *Activity* untir'd,  
 With copious life inform'd, and all awake ;  
 While in the radiant front, superior shines  
 That first paternal virtue, *Public Zeal* ;  
 Who throws o'er all an equal wide survey,  
 And, ever musing on the common weal,  
 Still labours glorious with some great design.

The amiable benignity of a heart happily alive to every impulse of humanity breaks out anew in the following passage. It was his hard fate, in common with every person in whose case poverty and merit are combined, to feel the harsh vicissitudes of fullness and want. And it cannot be too often repeated, that nothing like adversity improves our sentiments and principles of compassion. A constant flow of prosperity unavoidably hardens the heart. Our moral as well as our natural constitution is often not the worse for a temporary shock. Such is the innate presumption of the human heart, that we are seldom good for any

any thing till our most favourite inclinations are crossed, or some mortifying convictions of our natural frailty and impotence recal us to reason. Inordinate indulgence of one kind or other, is constantly to be found in the rear of success. The most fortunate characters in life are but too frequently the most unprincipled. Amidst circumstances so uniformly soothing, agreeable, and pampering, we grow giddy and wanton, stifle the suggestions of sobriety, and forget what we are. Desires that predominate admit of no moderation; and these, whether mercenary or profligate, though as various as the tempers and opposite as the interests of mankind, are all equally criminal. The man who on a serious and impartial retrospection of his heart, his passions, and his conduct does not find many things to rectify, some peculiar deviations from duty to regret, various appetites to reduce, and much imperfection to remove, has either never been thoroughly tried, or possesses an uncommon share of constitutional apathy, but he who does, feels his mind as it were mechanically open to the best impressions, and detests vice the more for his own temporary experience of its native malignity and baseness. Thus humility, which results only from an habitual consciousness of imbecility, is yet the foundation of every thing great and good in the hu-

man character. We must fall it seems before we can rise, and perhaps never reach the true sublimity of virtue, till our whole souls are filled in this manner with a lasting repugnance to every species of imperfection. No mind possessed of true merit ever relaxes into wickedness or weakness of any kind with a view to subsequent reformation or excellence. Virtue has but few votaries that would risque so much in her favour. But he who errs through ignorance, the sudden impulse of appetite, or the violence of temptation, and harbours no settled criminality of intention, may be the better for it all his life. It is the sense of necessity alone that in every thing produces improvement. What capital artist will not acknowledge that he owes more to the several blunders with which his first attempts were attended, than to all the various excellencies that marked the different stages of his subsequent progress. Our moral acquisitions originate from the same source, and are carried on in a manner perfectly similar. There are few situations in which we have not the greatest reason to suspect the strength of our principles. And till we find it necessary to realize this idea, we are never sufficiently on our guard against future elopements. Many habits and practices which meet with the approbation and connivance of the world, are notwithstanding extremely criminal.

nal. But once roused to a sense of character, and the vast importance of a peaceful mind, though perchance at some expence, our good resolutions recover fresh elasticity and vigour, and all the better energies of nature are henceforth in readiness to repel the most potent assaults of vice. On these principles the poet supposes with great justice, that we must suffer ourselves before we can well share the sufferings of others. In contrasting the characters of profligacy and generosity, it is hard to say whether the sentiment is most pathetic or instructive; but the language is certainly very beautiful, and the thought very tender.

For ever running an enchanted round,  
 Passes the day deceitful, vain and void;  
 As fleets the vision o'er the formless brain,  
 This moment hurrying wild the impassion'd soul,  
 The next in nothing lost. 'Tis so to him  
 The dreamer of this earth an idle blank;  
 A sight of horror, to the *cruel wretch*  
*Who all day long in sordid pleasure roll'd,*  
*Himself an useless load, has squander'd vile,*  
*Upon his scoundrel train, what might have cheer'd*  
*A drooping family of modest worth;*  
 But to the *generous still improving mind,*  
*That gives the hopeless heart to sing for joy,*  
*Diffusing kind beneficence around,*  
*Breastless as now descends the silent dew;*

To

To him, the long review of order'd life,  
Is inward rapture *only to be felt*.

Poets, philosophers, and divines have all in their turn moralized on sleep. The first and only idea with which it agitates the heaving breast of Thomson, is compassion for the poor distracted children of folly, thus in one moment deprived of all that engrosses their desires, excites their passions, and ferments their lives. With what affecting tenderness and generous indignation does he appeal to those objects and pursuits which have been so frequently fatal to our peace, for an accomplishment of the promises they made, and the end of the hopes they inspired? But his heart fails him, when he thinks on the many strange contradictions which thus creep into human likeness, and degrade the nature and name of man. How deplorable, in this respect, our hereditary meanness and insensibility. We seem incorrigible in proportion to the means adopted for our correction and amendment. All the experience of ages joined to that of our fathers, is unable to prevent our indulging the same frantic projects of ambition that ruined them.

Where now ye lying vanities of life!

Ye ever tempting, ever cheating train!

Where are you now, and what is your amount?

*Vexation,*

*Vexation, disappointment, and remorse;  
Sad sickening thought! and yet deluded man,  
A scene of crude disjointed visions past,  
And broken slumbers, rises still resolv'd,  
With new flush'd hopes to run the giddy round.*

III. The various evils that distress the inferior creation is a source of pathetic sentiments, almost peculiar to the subject of the *Seasons*. Our author is not insensible to one sympathetic movement that runs or tremulates through any form of existence whatever. He felt as much as man could feel, the least shock that affects the great universal principle of animation or sensibility, by which the whole system of life is inspired. How much do the spirit and vivacity of his pictures owe to the many sensible qualities with which he every where endows inanimate things? This innocent artifice the fancy very cordially indulges. Imposture indeed is so seldom connected with a benevolent intention, that it must be agreeable when it is. Poetical fictions often rid us of real sorrow; and who would not sometimes exchange a little painful truth, for a great deal of harmless pleasure? But in delineating the sufferings of creatures in so many important respects on a level with ourselves, imagination is totally out of the question, and the heart alone affected. We then overlook our natural superiority, and commiserate those for-  
kindred,

kindred, whom at another time, we might trample to death, or devour as lawful prey.

In the verses we now mean to select, how pathetically does the poet intercede, against the cruelty exercised by mankind over those very animals to whom they have so many obligations? And it is certainly hard to say, whether such a butchering propensity be the greatest insult or burlesque on all that is delicate, tender, and lovely in our nature. But whatever has been thrown out by the wisest sages and best poets, from Pythagoras and Homer down to Rousseau and Thomson, on this atrocious species of inhumanity, is but an additional demonstration, how extremely incorrigible we are, in all our fashionable and artificial enormities. With what sophistry and address do we shift this and every similar imputation, by flattering ourselves, that these are only the romantic ideas of cynics, hermits, and poets, who generally inveigh against every thing for the sake of singularity, and whom the world at large has always pitied as delirious. And pray what are most of the crimes that chequer the history of human nature, but the certain consequence of this obstinate unteachable disposition. It is not, as is vulgarly imagined, those who know least of mankind, but those who have bought the knowledge of them at the greatest expence, that accuse them most bitterly.

terly. Ais of a superior acquaintance with life are easily assumed. And here, as in every other science, those who have least cause are commonly the most boisterous in their pretensions. Nor is there a small share of stupidity in bluntly pronouncing them all puppies and simpletons, who notwithstanding our general depravity, still retain some vestiges of unaffected honesty. It is the pure mind alone, that can sufficiently repel the debilitating encroachments of art. And their heart and affections must be greatly independent of the world, and all its petrifying paradoxes, that can patiently admit convictions so long and universally exploded. Even most of our modern philosophers and moralists are guided more in the formation of their theorems by the spirit of the times than the nature of things. Society seems no longer under the management and tuition of those who think, but of those who think not. Reason in conjunction with all the virtues and graces of humanity, is almost, in every civilized society, supplanted by a fastidious fantastical chimaera, known by the name of taste, and which in every thing relating to men or manners is a fruitful source of extravagance and absurdity. Our philosophy comes not down from heaven, but is the child of human vanity, and inherits all the petulance and caprice of her parent. She exchanges

exchanges that daring spirit of magnanimity and independence, by which in antient times, she pushed her researches into the very bosom and hearts both of the little and the great; for a poor pusillanimous compliance with all the prescriptions of art, all the innovations of fashion, and all the excesses of luxury. It does not, as formerly, seem the ultimate object of the learned to make others the better for their knowledge, but to pass for any thing rather than reformers, to stoop to those who will not rise to them, and to be thought master of a thousand such accomplishments as Socrates, Epictetus, and Plutarch, would have blushed to have known. Pardon the comparison, ye illustrious Heroes of all that deserves the approbation of posterity! How many of those who ought to know you best, seem least inclined to realize your dictates. Instead of elevating and refining society with the generous and sublime truths you left behind you, they poison and debase it, by the pitiful puerilities of their own barren but pernicious inventions. Their doctrine does not, like yours, mortify, intimidate, or amend the world, but soothes the passions of the dissolute, and affords a kind of sanction to almost every criminal indulgence. The Sophists who debauched the Grecian youth, never propagated any tenets more incompatible with manliness of temper, probity of mind, and

and purity of life than they do. Reason, instead of directing them how to prosecute the improvement of others, is the greatest impediment to their own, and shews them only how they may administer their poison most effectually, or direct the perfidious stroke with the surer aim. By your gentle, but strong persuasive eloquence, the blooming honours that tempt the ambitious and aspiring to scramble and climb, become inviolable principles of acting well; pleasure lost its attractions, luxury its charms, wealth its influence, and even tyranny, though intoxicated with flattery and frantic with power, was wont to forego the victims selected and destined for destruction. The very brute creation profited by your instructions and humanity, thankfully acknowledged your patronage. Our poet seems animated with the same genius that inspired you, but ye had men for your auditors, and he has only their mimics!

And yet the wholesome herb neglected dies :  
Though with the pure exhilarating soul  
Of nutriment and health, and vital powers,  
Beyond the search of art, 'tis copious blest.  
For, with hot ravine fir'd, ensanguin'd man  
Is now become the lion of the plain,  
And worse. The wolf, who from the nightly fold  
Fierce drags the bleating prey, ne'er drunk her milk,  
Nor wore her warming fleece : nor has the steer,

At

At whose strong chest the deadly tyger hangs;  
 E'er plow'd for him. They too are temper'd high,  
 With hunger stung and vile necessity,  
 Nor lodges pity in their shaggy breast.  
 But *Man*, whom Nature form'd of milder clay,  
 With every kind emotion in his heart,  
 And taught alone to weep; while from her lap  
 She pours ten thousand delicacies, herbs,  
 And fruits, as numerous as the drops of rain  
 Or beams that gave them birth: shall he, fair form!  
 Who wears sweet smiles, and looks erect on Heaven,  
 E'er stoop to mingle with the prowling herd,  
 And dip his tongue in gore? The beast of prey  
 Blood-stain'd, deserves to bleed: *but you, ye flocks,*  
*What have ye done; ye peaceful people, what,*  
 To merit death? you, who have given us milk  
 In luscious streams, and lent us your own coat  
 Against the winter's cold? And *the plain ox,*  
*That harmless, honest, guileless animal,*  
*In what has he offended?* he, whose toil,  
 Patient and ever ready clothes the land  
 With all the pomp of harvest; shall he bleed,  
 And struggling groan beneath the cruel hands  
 Even of the clown he feeds; and that, perhaps,  
 To swell the riot of th' autumnal feast,  
 Won by his labour? —————

I have often been very much affected with our  
 bard's description of hunting the *stag*. There is  
 something about this elegant and masterly crea-  
 ture that wonderfully interests the reader in his  
 safety

safety. It hurts every feeling we possess, that so many fine qualities as he is endowed with, should be thus wantonly abused by those who ought to value them more highly, and treat them more mercifully. We are greatly pleased with his daring and intrepid spirit, his symmetrical form, his gentle manners, his matchless strength, and his unparalleled fleetness. But how lamentable the consideration, that all this avails him nought against the hostile combination that urge his destruction. Hounds, horses, and men start and persevere with unrelenting ardour in hunting him down. Somerville, in his *Chace*, describes the various methods of pursuit and flight on this occasion, in a manner equally beautiful and minute. His account, indeed, is rather too circumstantial and tedious to make a deep or forcible impression. It contains many strokes of true pathetic; but nothing interrupts the course of generous emotions so much as an officious attention to inferior objects. In this respect Thomson's descriptions are uncommonly pure and expressive. There is a truth in his conceptions, and a precision in his phraseology, totally new in this kind of poetry. Here particularly his brevity and perspicuity are equally admirable. In the whole passage he neglects not one capital incident, and we are struck only with such as are.

The STAG too, singled from the herd, where long  
He rang'd the branching monarch of the shades,  
Before the tempest drives. At first, in speed  
He, sprightly, puts his faith; and, rous'd by fear,  
Gives all his swift aërial soul to flight;  
Against the breeze he darts, that way the more  
To leave the lessening murderous cry behind:  
Deception short! tho' fleeteter than the winds  
Blown o'er the keen-air'd mountain by the north,  
He bursts the thickets, glances thro' the glades,  
And plunges deep into the wildest wood.  
If slow, yet sure, adhesive to the track  
Hot-steaming, up behind him come again  
Th' inhuman rout, and from the shady depth  
Expel him, circling thro' his every shift.  
He sweeps the forest oft; and sobbing fees  
The glades, mild opening to the golden day;  
Where, in kind contest, with his butting friends  
He wont to struggle, or his loves enjoy.  
Oft in the full-descending flood he tries  
To lose the scent, and lave his burning sides:  
Oft seeks the herd; the watchful herd, alarm'd,  
With selfish care avoid a brother's woe.  
What shall he do? His once so vivid nerves,  
So full of buoyant spirit, now no more  
Inspire the course; but fainting breathless toil,  
Sick, seizes on his heart: he stands at bay;  
And puts his last weak refuge in despair.  
The big round tears run down his dappled face;  
He groans in anguish; while the growling pack,  
Blood-happy, hang at his fair jutting chest,  
And mark his beauteous checker'd sides with gore.

. Smoaking

Smoking a Bee-hive is also a fact in our commerce with the inferior creation, much too shocking to escape our authors reprehension. His generous abhorrence of this savage action, is greatly and justly aggravated by the innocent manners and exemplary economy of these prudent political creatures. They waste not their time as many of us do in idleness and mischief, but are always busy and always pleased. Nor do they ever suffer so much from any invader, as from those who pretend to take them under human protection. How tenderly and emphatically does the poet expostulate with us on such implacable instances of our tyranny and oppression: and his sympathy for the objects of it how becoming and liberal.

Ah see where robb'd, and murder'd, in the pit,  
Lies the still heaving hives at evening snatch'd  
Beneath the cloud of guilt-concealing night,  
And fix'd o'er sulphur, while not dreaming ill,  
The happy people in their waxen cells,  
Sat tending public cares, planning schemes  
Of temperance, for winter poor, rejoiced  
To mark, full flowing round, their copious stores.  
Sudden the dark oppressive steam ascends;  
And us'd to milder scents, the tender race,  
By thousands, tumble from their honey'd domes,  
Convolv'd and agonizing in the dust.

And was it then for this you roam'd the spring,  
 Intent from flower to flower ? for this you toil'd  
 Ceasless the burning summer heats away ?  
 For this in Autumn search'd the blooming waste,  
 Nor lost one sunny gleam ? for this sad fate ?  
*O man! tyrannic Lord! how long, how long*  
*Shall prostrate nature groan beneath your rage*  
*A waiting renovation? when obliged,*  
*Must you destroy.*

Robbing birds of their young has been long a favourite diversion of school-boys, but marks in very significant characters that ignominious spirit of hostility and depredation, to which we are so early and inhumanly addicted. Against this cruel species of amusement Thomson remonstrates with his usual tenderness and indignation. Shenstone, in one of his beautiful pastorals, which by the way are singularly excellent from such a writer, has a very charming stanza on the same subject.

I have found out a gift for my fair ;  
 I have found where the wood pigeons breed ;  
 But let me that plunder forbear,  
 She will say 'twas a barbarous deed,  
 For he ne'er could be true she averr'd  
 Who could rob a poor bird of its young,  
 And I lov'd her the more when I heard  
 Such tenderness fall from her tongue.

The characteristic of Shenstone's muse, is gentleness and simplicity. On some occasions, though rarely, he likewise discovers all the feeling of a mind most exquisitely delicate and tender. He never, however, says any thing very masterly or spirited. His strains have all the softness of the female, but want the dignity and ardour of the masculine genius. No man ever said easier, and perhaps it is impossible to say sillier things than he did. Thomson has no inferior share of sentiment, but it never unmans him. The tear glistens in his eye on every proper or important occasion, but he scorns to prostitute his feelings on trifles. And nothing could be more happily conceived for illustrating the principle idea in the following passage, than the nightingale's distress on finding a vacant nest. What soft and melting tones may not then be expected from her whose most common notes are so singularly plaintive, soothing and emphatical? She who always sings from the heart, must when rudely plundered of her dearest cares and concern, disclose her sorrows with inimitable energy. A soft and pleasing melancholy mixed with a chasteness and vivacity, all her own, is the distinguishing characteristic of her most ordinary music; but who can describe the tenderness of her strains in such a situation? What a

lively picture of her sorrows and her song do the lines in *italick* contain? Such, O ye poets, and so superior the genuine effusions of a warm and feeling heart; to all the florid exuberance of mere imagination? So that nature in unison, with the voice of distress, from whatever quarter, is, after all that has been fabled of the muses, by much the best inspiration. What a pity that to make verses, as well as faces, and to be susceptible of the workings of humanity, are so very different things.

But let not chief the Nightingale lament,  
 Her ruin'd care too delicately framed  
 To brook the harsh confinement of the cage,  
 Oft, when returning with her loaded bill,  
 Th' astonish'd mother finds a vacant nest,  
 By the hard hand of unrelenting clowns  
 Robb'd; *to the ground the vain provision falls;*  
*Her pinions ruffle, and low drooping scarce*  
*Can bear the mourner to the poplar shade;*  
*Where, all abandon'd to despair, she sings*  
*Her sorrows thro' the night; and, on the bough,*  
*Sole sitting, still at every dying fall*  
*Takes up again her lamentable strain*  
*Of winding woe; till wide around the woods*  
*Sigh to her song, and with her wail resound.*

With instances of this, and a similar nature, the *Seasons* every where abound. I shall but mention

tion one more, and alas! it is much too tender as well as too common a one to be overlooked. We have long considered the *Dove*, as an emblem of every thing amiable and harmless. And religion itself has adopted the figure with the most solemn propriety, in authenticating the character of its Author. Indeed, the whole manners, as well as the form, and voice, and looks of this beautiful bird, are marked with unparalleled meekness and ineffable simplicity. It discovers no habits but those of the purest innocence; its dispositions are full of gentleness and delicacy, and the only habits it has are a love of ease and an attachment to its kind. But these peculiarities, lovely and endearing as they are, afford no asylum whatever against the wantonness of human cruelty. And the circumstance to which the poet alludes, I protest once to have seen exemplified in such a manner as pierced every feeling in my heart. To what meanness do suggestions of revenge bend the mind of man. The poor unhappy bird, just about the very hour in which its mate had been shot by its side, was known to frequent the identical branch where the deed happened for weeks together, and mourn the fate of its partner; till the murderer, whose infamy ought to be perpetuated, stung by the reproaches of his neighbours, and

that he might no longer be upbraided with its griefs, was unmanly and base enough to kill it also.

The stock *Dove* only thro' the forest cooes  
Mournfully hoarse; oft ceasing from his plaint,  
Short interval of weary woe ! again  
The sad idea of his murder'd mate,  
Struck from his side by savage fowlers' guile,  
Across his fancy comes ; and then resounds  
A louder song of sorrow thro' the grove.

IV. The *Seasons* discover, in almost every line, a latent or oblique reference to human nature and human life. This capital and affecting object is never out of the poet's head, or his heart, whatever else should come across him. Trace but his muse through her wildest and most excentric motions, and you shall always find her touching some string that has a near affinity to the heart, or full of some sentiment which long absence revives in the mind. Nor could any thing whatever produce a finer effect, or do more credit to his taste and judgment. For a proper management of the memory is one of our most inexhaustible and constant springs of sensibility and tenderness. A certain degree of contrition or content is a sensation which unavoidably accompanies every reflection on the past. From recollection alone, the life of man is either embittered

tered or embalmed. By the sole weight of this principle, virtue often controuls our passions and pursuits, where no other restraints are felt. Does not the thief frequently drop his midnight plunder? the murderous knife fall insensibly from the hand of the assassin? and the intemperate votaries of pleasure shrink from the unhallowed embrace, even in the darkest recesses of guilt? From hence, indeed, all the powers of conscience, and all the stings of remorse, these fearful scourges of wicked minds, originate. But, O how sweet and delicious a settled consciousness of integrity, in the tranquil and placid review of a well-spent life! The man, whose intentions have been thus uniformly pure, may well be misfortunate, but cannot be wretched. His mind, replete with the noblest virtues, and tempered by the gentlest graces, will secure him a satisfaction independent of the world, blunt the edge of every disaster, and hush his feelings into peace, when all is black and gloomy around him. He wraps himself up in the sweet and cordial sensations which innocence and uprightness afford him, though poverty and wretchedness, the rueful companions of solitary virtue, reduce him to the last extremity; though sickness emaciate his body, and vexation his mind; though *Slander*, with her thousand tongues, lard his story with the foulest aspersions. What are the obliquities of the worthless to him,

him,

him, while he wants not an asylum in Providence and his own heart. And the pleasure which this persuasion diffuses through all the faculties and affections of a good mind, is one of our strongest incentives to well-doing. A thousand things combine to heighten this delightful sensation. It is the sweetest incense that smokes on the altar of self-love, and so grateful to all the benevolent prepossessions of humanity, that most virtues, in the present mysterious disposition of things, are capable of no other recompence.

A fixed aversion to settling in the present, as abstracted from the future, is one of the most striking features in the frame and temper of our minds. We seldom catch our thoughts, but when they are either dwelling on past scenes, or figuring and fabricating new ones. Indeed, the idea of what once was, is the more endearing, that the object to which it refers can never be recalled. Early enjoyments make an impression which no time can erase. Concomitant or incidental pain dies with the circumstances that produce it, and nothing survives the intervening vicissitudes of life, however insignificant and unaffecting, but the sad remembrance of pleasures unappropriated, and opportunities unimproved. A sense of this, however, is unavoidable, while the memory has the power of retention, or the heart of feeling. Nor is it with-

out a mixture of the highest tenderness and regret, that the amiable and interesting period of youth is thus reviewed and contemplated, in proportion as it recedes from our possession.

The happiness and perfection of our system are inseparable from the exercise of all its moral and active powers. For this reason, the different stages of life perpetually strike us, as contrasted with each other. At least we seldom view them but in a state of comparison. And so strong is our partiality for first impressions, that in every respect we give them the preference. But infancy, though an age of innocence, is not an age of joy. We little consider the helpless and abject circumstances of our birth, or amidst how many sorrows we come into being. For we are no sooner born, than exposed to sufferings which we can but ill sustain, to pains which we cannot remove, to wants which we cannot supply, to complaints which we cannot explain. We fondly dream, that youth, because all hope, is all happiness, and artfully avoid the reflection, that the mind is then eternally springing forward in full expectation of maturity of bliss with maturity of age. But the more we dip into life, the deeper we sink into misery, and enjoyment uniformly diminishes as years increase.

Paradoxical as it may appear, it is a truth suggested by constant experience, that most enjoyments  
are

are never less relished than in the very instant of fruition. We exult while they are yet remote, and give all our souls to the pleasing palpitations of hope, but possess them with the most unaccountable indifference, and pathetically regret their absence the moment they are gone. Such is the natural caprice of the heart, and such the evanescent quality of every mortal delight ! We never know the worth of health till in sickness, of plenty till in want, of youth till in age, of happiness till in misery. Our awakening to a sense of what we might once have been, is only when the acquisition is no longer in our power. Nor have we any thing then to compensate our loss, but the cutting reflection, that our fate, however bitter, is no more than the natural consequence of our own folly.

It is only in such a train of thinking as this, or something similar, that we can possibly enter into the spirit, or relish the Pathetic of Thomson's poetry. His various allusions to human misery particularly indicate a disposition of heart, which nothing but the deepest reflections on manners and life could thus happily mature. To this sweet sympathizing temper of mind he turns and improves, the minutest circumstance. How unexpectedly, for example, does he interest his readers in the fate of the very insect tribes, by exhibiting it as but too natural a picture of their own ?

Thick

Thick in yon stream of light a thousand ways,  
Upward and downward, thwarting, and convolved,  
The quivering nations sport; till, tempest wing'd,  
Fierce Winter sweeps them from the face of day.  
Even so luxurious men unheeding pass  
An idle Summer's life in Fortune's shine,  
A season's glitter! Thus they flutter on  
From toy to toy, from vanity to vice,  
Till blown away by death, *Oblivion* comes  
Behind, and *strikes them from the book of life.*

To describe the luxury of nature in the torrid regions requires, the utmost vigour of his genius. There the vegetable and animal world swarm with monsters. The strength, ferocity, and stature of those predaceous creatures, who prowl in the deepest solitudes, who never visit the haunts of men but to devour them, and the very sight of whom is enough to chill the heart with horror, are truly incredible. Such is the enormous serpent who lurks by the roots of trees, amidst the bushes on the banks of pools, and in the thickets that grow along the road, in readiness to spring on every passenger that comes in his way,—the tiger, with a beautiful exterior, and a malignant heart, an appetite for indiscriminate slaughter, and a force not inferior to his fury,—the dappled panther, whose lustre dazzles only to destroy, who lives in habitual carnage, and seems never happy but in the act of killing,—  
the

the wolf, whose cruelty increases with his success, and all whose appetites are as fierce as his nature is dastardly and unrelenting,—the ghastly hyena, as desperate and fell in disposition, as its shape is ugly and its manners obscene,—and the lion, with a voice like thunder, raging for his prey, shaking his formidable mane, opening his enormous jaws, and stalking with terrible majesty in all the stateliness of conscious dominion. Our amiable and tender-hearted poet forgets not to commiserate the wretched traveller, who, by whatever accident, finds himself all alone in this forlorn condition. For the fact, however alarming it may appear to us, is but too common in the hostile deserts of the East.

Unhappy he ! who from the first of joys,

Society cut off, is left alone

Amid this world of death. Day after day

Sad on the jutting eminence he sits,

And views the main that ever toils below ;

Still fondly forming in the farthest verge,

Where the round ether mixes with the wave,

Ships, dim-discovered, dropping from the clouds ;

At evening, to the setting Sun he turns

A mournful eye, and down his *dying heart*

*Sinks helpless* ; while the *wonted* roar is up,

And *his* continual thro' the tedious night.

The

The images and diction of the *Seasons* are never perhaps so rapid, lively and apposite as when Thomson deciphers the many disasters and misfortunes incident to society. He then assumes a tone that swells every muscle of the heart, and leaves not a fibre of the whole system untouched. The benevolent intention, as well as the inherent beauties of the subsequent passage shall be my apology for inserting it. Such is the sympathy it breathes, the humanity it dictates, and the generosity it commends, that it were singly sufficient to redeem and endear the *Seasons*, though there were not another good line in the whole poem.

Ah little think the gay licentious proud,  
Whom pleasure, power, and affluence furround;  
They, who their thoughtless hours in giddy mirth,  
And wanton, often cruel, riot waste;  
Ah little think they, while they dance along,  
How many feel, this very moment, death  
And all the sad variety of pain.  
How many sink in the devouring flood,  
Or more devouring flame. How many bleed,  
By shameful variance betwixt Man and Man.  
How many pine in want, and dungeon glooms;  
Shut from the air, and common use  
Of their own limbs. How many drink the cup  
Of baleful grief, or eat the bitter bread  
Of misery. Sore pierc'd by wintry winds,

How

How many shrink into the sordid hut  
Of cheerless poverty. How many shake  
With all the fiercer tortures of the mind,  
Unbounded passion, madness, guilt, remorse;  
Whence tumbled headlong from the height of life,  
They furnish matter for the tragic Muse,  
Even in the vale, where wisdom loves to dwell,  
With friendship, peace, and contemplation join'd,  
How many, rack'd with honest passions, droop  
In deep retir'd distress. How many stand  
Around the death-bed of their dearest friends,  
And point the parting anguish. Thought fond Man  
Of these, and all the thousand nameless ills,  
That one incessant struggle render life,  
One scene of toil, of suffering, and of fate,  
Vice in his high career would stand appall'd,  
And heedless rambling Impulse learn to think;  
The conscious heart of Charity would warm,  
And her wide wish Benevolence dilate;  
The social tear would rise, the social sigh;  
And into clear perfection, gradual bliss,  
Refining still, the social passions work.

Of all those objects that work so powerfully on our natures, female distress is by much the most operative. This rouses all the heart, and touches the sympathy of man into action. The complaints of a woman, unless when defeated by some other feeling, procures immediate attention and instant relief. Indeed it is not in the masculine temper to treat

treat them with indifference. We are often more solicitous about their welfare than our own, and there is hardly any man so barbarous as not to exhibit some striking proofs of generosity, when their subject is in question. The peculiar delicacy of their make, their exquisite sensibilities, their dependent condition, the winning assiduities of their manners, and the settled propensity we discover to serve and protect them, give us a lasting and active concern in whatever relates to their pain or pleasure. Thomson felt very sensibly the force of this circumstance on his own heart, and applies it with peculiar judgment to work on that of his reader. But the mind that could dictate the following lines must have been early and long accustomed to the most pathetic and affecting emotions.

Who can un pitying see the flowery race,  
Shed by the morn, their new-flush'd bloom resign,  
Before the parching beam. *So fade the fair*  
*When fevers revel through their azure veins.*

His address to the shade of a young lady whose death he bewails, at the same time that he soothes her friends and himself with the sweetest consolation, is perhaps as pathetic as words can make it. How superior the energy of truth to that of fiction? What a difference between the language of real and

R

affected

affected distress? A feeling heart, under the recent impression of grief is never at a loss to suggest the most feeling things? How little and contemptible all the efforts of art, to the genuine effusions of a mind ingulphed in anguish. Sorrow warms the whole soul, and fills her various faculties with something like inspiration. It is then that imagination teems with images, that the memory is full of recollection, that severity of taste is amply repaid by strength of genius; and that the swelling heart freely pours forth all its deepest and dearest concerns. The passage deserves to be got by heart by all who have any interest in the memory of departed worth.

And art thou, STANLEY, of that sacred band?  
 Alas, for us too soon! Tho' rais'd above  
 The reach of human pain, above the flight  
 Of human joy; yet, with a mingled ray  
 Of sadly pleas'd remembrance, must thou feel  
 A mother's love, a mother's tender woe:  
 Who seeks thee still, in many a former scene;  
 Seeks thy fair form, thy lovely beaming eyes,  
 Thy pleasing converse, by gay lively sense  
 Inspir'd: where moral wisdom mildly shone,  
 Without the toil of art; and virtue glow'd,  
 In all her smiles, without forbidding pride.  
 But, O thou best of parents! wipe thy tears;  
 Or rather to PARENTAL NATURE pay

The

The tears of grateful joy, who for a while  
Lent thee this younger self, this opening bloom  
Of thy enlighten'd mind and gentle worth:

The comforts suggested to the friends of this amiable person, whose early death is thus feelingly lamented; are those of the most tender, soothing, and sympathizing nature. He endeavours to turn their grief into gratitude, and would have them rather thankful for being blessed with her so long, than distressed by losing her so soon. The moral deserves a place in every memory. We should not take the length of our lives by the time we live, but from the goodness we do, and the happiness we confer. Many live very long to very little purpose. The best almost every where die first. We seldom find young persons of distinguished worth, but our hearts take the alarm. We are seized with a presentiment of their fate, and instantly conclude them too good to live. And may it not be added, for it cannot surely be denied, that we mostly degenerate as we grow old? Age improves us in the knowledge of the world, but not in habits of goodness. We exchange the views of a warm for those of a selfish temper, and abate in gentleness and humanity as we increase in caution and reserve. But the grossest extravagances of youth are not half so criminal as the dark intrigues of malignity which so frequently

debase the human mind in the latest periods of life. Thus all the finer sympathies of the heart are sensibly diminished by years, and like certain metals, we uniformly rust and corrode as we cool. Our best affections petrify with our bones, and as the stone accelerates in motion with its fall, we literally grow worse and worse the longer we live. How should it be otherwise? Every thing here is drenched in pollution. Whatever we touch, or taste, or see, is tainted with impurity, and the very atmosphere seems impregnated with elements of destruction! We cannot lift an eye, or move a step, where the criminalities of life do not stare us broad in the face, and happy they who suck them not in, with every breath they draw. Impressed by such reflections as these, the subsequent lines are in perfect unison with the dearest expectations of the human heart:

Believe the muse, the wintry blast of death  
*Kills* not the *buds* of virtue. No: they spread  
 Beneath the heavenly beam of brighter suns,  
 Thro' *endless* ages, into *higher* powers.

Life, independent of immortality, to such a nature as ours, were at best a pitiful inheritance; but the conviction that we yet shall be happy in another state of being, lessens its hardships, and lifts our hopes above it. For all the sages in the  
 world

world have been strangely duped, and the wishes of mankind very wantonly and universally abused, if our ultimate happiness make not still a material part in the merciful plan of Providence. There, all our mental and moral desires point as naturally, as our different appetites to their respective objects of gratification. And why, or for what should we relinquish so delightful a prospect? Forgive our presumption and ignorance, ye mighty Adepts in reason and refinement! We yield you the honour of superior wisdom, on the simple condition that you do not inveigle us in the same perplexities with yourselves, or darken our hemisphere with the dismal clouds that habitually settle in yours. Find as much fault with the moral government of the world as you will, but impose not your nostrums on us at the dreadful expence of our peace. You are welcome to all the mighty satisfaction your philosophy suggests. For our part, we would rather be vulgar and happy than wretched and wise. And while you congratulate yourselves, that like the fowls of heaven, or the beasts of the field, you have only your season, and give way in your turn to a new succession of the same temporary and evanescent beings, we will humbly hope with the poet, that in spite of all the imputations of credulity and surmises of scepticism, there is a period and place, fixed in the destinations of Nature, where

in due time we shall yet be as perfect as virtue and as blessed as goodness can make us. Let us indulge the pleasing expectation, that then and there, vices inflame not the passions; that real and imaginary miseries are no more; that all mutual animosities are for ever extinguished; that the sweet reciprocations of friendship are not henceforth checked or suspended by the chilling apprehension of either breach or separation, and that society, as here, is no longer blasted with a penury of hearts. Surely a more ravishing idea, whether true or false, can not lay hold on the mind than one thus flattering and congenial to all our strongest and best desires. From this persuasion the human affections derive an elevation and sublimity vastly superior to all the little pitiful struggles of wealth and ambition! And blessed be the genius of Thomson, for mingling in this manner with the purest strains of poetry some of the sweetest and most infallible consolations of humanity.

C H A P. VIII.

*On the Sublimity of the Seasons.*

*For from the birth  
Of mortal man, the sovereign maker said,  
That not in humble nor in brief delight,  
That not the fating echoes of renown,  
Pow'r's, purple robes, nor pleasures flowry lap,  
The soul should find enjoyment : but from these  
Turning disdainful to an equal good,  
Thro' all th' ascent of things, enlarge her views,  
Till every bound at length should disappear,  
And infinite perfection close the scene !*

MANY passages in the *Seasons*, belong to a much higher class than any we have yet discriminated. These are purposely reserved till now, as being most likely to deepen the general impression, or rivet such sentiments as result from the whole. And surely whatever tends in this manner, to retrench the levities of fancy, instigate reflection or engross the heart, can hardly be altogether useless. In this persuasion, having said so much about our Author's attention to the *beauty*, we shall now consider in a few words how he manages the *magnificence* of nature. And if not dupes to a fastidious taste or

an insensible heart, we shall find this beautiful and affecting poem as elevated and sublime as it is agreeable and charming.

Ideas of littleness and greatness seem peculiarly congenial to the human understanding. Our conceptions very sensibly contract and enlarge alternately with minuteness and amplitude of every kind. And of all our rational pleasures, that which accompanies the expansion of our mental and moral powers is by much the most exalted. The destination of our system is as noble as its origin is mean. In us the inspiration of mind, is not a flash that perishes but a flame that lasts for ever and brightens as it burns. We are not only made susceptible, but originally endowed with the powers as well as impregnated with the desires of immortality. Gravitation is a quality not more essential to bodies, than aspiration to the mind of man. And what is the history, both of the individual and society but that of a gradual ascent, from the lowest to the highest measure of human perfection and excellence?

Our aversion to diminution, both in a literal and figurative sense, is but the natural consequence of this principle. At least we never receive much entertainment from any thing extremely little. The American *humming-bird*, for example, is a spectacle of great curiosity, but  
if

If we analyse the feelings, it suggests we shall very soon be satisfied, that it is the novelty contrast and neatness, not the size, to which we owe our delight.

In truth the human mind is transported, only with what carries her out of herself. She feels uneasy in a state of confinement. It is her nature to soar, and of consequence to suffer from whatever interrupts her flight. Hence emotions of sublimity suit with astonishing propriety the vastness of her views, the energy of all her active faculties, and that glorious ambition which stimulates her ardour and prompts her exertions.

Notwithstanding the modern acquisitions of philosophy, the whole apparatus of mind is still extremely mysterious. The mechanism of thought, however, proceeds on laws and principles we apprehend not less invariable than those of matter. Our powers of conception uniformly imbibe the respective qualities of their objects, just as our bodies are affected by those of food and climate. We behold with conscious dignity whatever is great and elevated. It is impossible to take a steady view of the surrounding heavens, without feeling a growing capaciousness of soul and a placid swell of the heart. But impressions of simple grandeur are received only from objects of pure magnitude. The ocean, extensive deserts, and a range of enormous mountains,

tains, are all sources of great ideas. Height and depth, and breadth and length of any uncommon demensions, are likewise viewed with similar sensations. But the human soul brooks no sort of restraint, or at least possesses not capacity sufficient, to comprehend the scene she evidently pants to occupy. It is in the contemplations, especially of infinite space, omnipotent power, immense existence and eternal duration, where mind seems most at home and imagination most in character. Those objects indeed are peculiarly fitted to act on all the capital movements in our system. And every other energy is necessarily absorbed in theirs.

Blessed be our kind benignant Creator, for thus establishing a connection so full of utility and delight between the visible signatures of his invisible power, and the instinctive movements of the human heart. They meet no where but in our ideas, and their union is no inconsiderable addition to our happiness! Why is the ear so finely attuned to all the delicious modulations of natural and artificial sounds? Why are the eyes so fashioned as to catch every beauteous feature and every splendid character that mark the minutest and sublimest works of nature? And why is the perception of such objects as these accompanied with sensations so salutary, so grateful, so elevating? We are not only supplied with every

needful convenience but liberally indulged with a luxury, as profuse as our hearts can wish, and as refined as our natures can require. The heavens, the earth, the air, the ocean, at once satisfy our wants and inspire us with rapture, Even those very workings of timidity so troublesome, while predominant, are yet found in many cases, indirectly, at least, to occasion peculiar delight. Thunder, earthquakes, lightnings, and hurricanes, alarming and tremendous as they are, indicate something not unpleasing however awful ! Outrageous as they seem to us, they are under a check which they cannot resist, and subject to a will that orders every thing for the best. By the same hand that launches the thunderbolt, our fleeting lives are sustained, and he who impregnates the clouds with sulphur and darts the impetuous fire-ball, perfumes the air we breathe and tempers the light we see. Nor is he less conspicuous to the philosophic eye, in the murmuring brook than in the raging sea, in a gentle gale, than in a violent storm, in the glimmerings of a glow-worm, than in the blaze of the sun, in the shades of a rose than in the colours of the rainbow, in the shell of a snail than in the vaulted heavens, and in the web of a spider than in the general system of the universe !

Such are some of the various and affecting phenomena from which the *Muse* of Thomson culled

culled her choicest flowers. To him nature, was happily familiar in all her fairest and sublimest forms. He saw nothing but beauty, heard nothing but music, and felt nothing from the objects around him but palpitations of joy and sentiments of gratitude! Nor is it easy to say whether he succeeds most as a sublime Writer, in delineating the wonders of external nature or disclosing the magnanimous sentiments of a worthy mind. We can only now afford the reader a short illustration of these two particulars.

The first of these involves in part at least, almost every description in the *Seasons*. But we mean to select for the readers satisfaction and entertainment, only a few of the most striking instances, merely to give him an idea of that sublime majestic manner in which the muse of Thomson kept pace with his subject.

An idea of grotesque wildness involving much latitude, impresses the mind with sensations of astonishment and awe. In his descriptions of the tropical countries, how many objects formed on this capacious scale are flung together in the sublimest groups imaginable

Majestic woods, of every vigorous green,  
Stage above stage, high waving o'er the hills;  
Or to the far horizon wide diffus'd,  
A boundless deep immensity of shade.

He

He adds in the same characteristic tone of unaffected grandeur; where by the way, the additional circumstance of shade, wonderfully deepens the solemnity of the scene

Here lofty trees, to ancient song unknown,  
The noble sons of potent heat and floods  
Prone-rushing from the clouds, rear high to Heaven  
Their thorny stems, and broad around them throw  
*Meridian gloom.*—

What a moving and awful picture does he give us of the *pestilence*, that dreadful visitation of the Almighty, as it rages in full horror among the noxious climates of the east? In the lines that conclude the passage, we have an image of *despair*, singularly beautiful, picturesque and new.

Thus o'er the prostrate city *black Despair*  
*Extends her raven-wing*; while, to complete  
The scene of desolation, stretch'd around,  
The grim guards stand, denying all retreat,  
And give the flying wretch a better death.

Nothing can possibly be more affecting, even in idea, than the ocean in one of those tremendous *blasts* which happen so frequently between the tropics. Here inevitable destruction impending from the heavens above, and yawning from the depths beneath, increasing darkness, conflicting elements, and mutual consternation and  
terror,

terror, combine to fill imagination with fear, and overwhelm the heart with sorrow.

—A faint deceitful calm,  
A fluttering gale, the dæmon sends before,  
To tempt the spreading sail. Then down at once,  
Precipitant, descends a mingled mass  
Of roaring winds, and flame, and rushing floods.  
In wild amazement fix'd the sailor stands.  
Art is too slow : By rapid fate oppress'd,  
His broad-wing'd vessel *drinks* the whelming tide;  
Hid in the bosom of the black abyss.

Some of the circumstances that announce the awful approach of *thunder*, are narrated in terms that exhibit the object in all its natural importance and sublimity. Such as

A boding silence reigns,  
Dread thro' the dun expanse ; save the *dull sound*  
That from the mountain, previous to the storm,  
*Rolls o'er the muttering earth*, disturbs the flood,  
And shakes the forest leaf without a breath.

And where the birds and herds are alarmed with the signs of the coming tempest, surely the canvas never exhibited any thing more real and affecting

Prone, to the lowest vale, the ærial tribes  
Descend : the *tempest-loving raven scarce*  
*Dares wing the dubious dusk*. In rueful gaze

The

The *cattle* stand, and on the scowling heavens  
Cast a deploring eye.

His description of thunder and lightening, is not only just and picturesque, but enriched with strokes of the deepest sublimity. The progress of that wonderful phenomenon is finely traced, and the natural grandeur that accompanies all its stages supported throughout.

At first, *heard solemn o'er, the verge of heaven,*  
The *tempest* growls; but as it nearer comes,  
And rolls its *awful burden on the wind,*  
The lightnings flash a larger curve, and more  
The noise astounds: till over head a sheet  
Of livid flame *discloses wide*; then shuts,  
And opens *wider*; shuts and opens still  
*Expansive* wrapping *ether in a blaze.*  
Follows the loosen'd aggravated roar,  
*Enlarging, deepening, mingling; peal on peal*  
Crush'd horrible, *convulsing* heaven and earth!

In the following scene, relenting nature may well be figured, weeping over the direful catastrophe, occasioned by the furious elements among the most harmless of her offspring and those of her walks, that are least accustomed to violence and outrage. He introduces it with one of the fairest spectacles of nature, perhaps that the eye of man can behold!

Wide-

Wide-rent, the clouds  
 Pour a whole flood; and yet, its flame unquench'd,  
 Th' unconquerable light'ning *struggles* through,  
*Ragged and fierce, or in red whirling balls,*  
 And *fires* the *mountains* with redoubled rage.  
*Black* from the *stroke*, above, the smould'ring pine  
 Stands a *sad shatter'd trunk*; and, stretch'd below,  
 A lifeless group the *blasted cattle* lie:  
 Here the soft flocks, with that same *harmless look*  
 They *were* alive, and *ruminating still*  
 In *fancy's eye*; and there the frowning bull,  
 And *ox half-rais'd*.

He has even made the approach of the autumnal fogs a subject of sublime description, by interweaving in his account of it the receding of a most majestic object from human view. A mountain is always great, but eminently sublime when thus surrounded with clouds

No more the mountain, *horrid, vast, sublime,*  
 Who pours a sweep of rivers from his sides,  
 And high between contending kingdoms rears  
 The rocky long division, *fills the view*  
*With great variety*; but in a *night*  
*Of gathering vapour*, from the baffled sense  
 Sinks dark and dreary.

His description of the moon, may perhaps be thought a little too severely wrought. For grandeur suffers essentially from the least want  
 of

of simplicity. The truth is, Thomson generally explains at the same time that he describes. This unavoidably wears an air of obscurity, to such readers at least, as are not previously acquainted with the subject. Fortunately, the exceptionable lines may here be omitted, without injuring the rest, which apart from these, cannot but leave some pleasing impressions of sublimity on every susceptible heart.

——— Mean-while the *moon*

Full orb'd and *breaking thro' the scatter'd clouds,*  
Shews her *broad visage* in the *crimson'd east.*  
Now thro' the *passing cloud* she seems to *sloop,*  
Now up the pure cerulean *rides sublime!*  
Wide the pale deluge floods, and streaming mild  
O'er the sky'd mountain to the shadowy vale,  
While rocks and flood reflect the *quivering gleam,*  
The whole air whitens with a boundless tide  
Of silver radiance, *trembling* round the world.

It is the distinguishing province of all true poetry, to people the regions of imagination with such beings as are best adapted to the situation. This may be called the truth of fiction, and is just as essential to description as the strictest characteristical propriety, to dramatic composition. Every thing the muse addresses, has a genius suited to its nature, with whom, she establishes an immediate correspondence. Thus, the capital harbin-

gers of a winter tempest, are pointed out in all their specific colouring and qualities. The whole passage is replete with shades of the deepest solemnity and grandeur; but the lines subjoined deserve peculiar attention, for the sake of a circumstance uncommonly picturesque and original.

Along the woods, along the moorish fens,  
*Sighs* the sad *Genius* of the coming storm;  
 And up among the loose disjointed cliffs,  
 And fractur'd mountains wild, the brawling brook  
 And cave, presageful, send a hollow moan,  
 Refounding long in listening Fancy's ear.

The terror inspired by the scene, thus prefigured even in a situation of the greatest security, and some of its most alarming accompaniments, are finely marked in the subsequent verses. It is moreover an instance of familiar ideas, being wrought up into sentiments, not less sublime than picturesque.

*Sleep* frightened flies; and round the rocking dome  
 For entrance eager, howls the savage blast.  
 Then too, they say, thro' all the burden'd air,  
 Long groans are heard, shrill sounds, and distant sighs,  
 That, utter'd by the *dæmon* of the night  
 Warn the devoted wretch of woe and death.

From the same passage, I add one of the grandest images perhaps that ever swelled the human

human mind. Nor do I just now recollect an instance from any Author, ancient or modern, in which simplicity and sublimity are more happily and completely united.

Meantime the *mountain-billows*, to the clouds  
In dreadful *tumult* swell'd, surge above surge,  
*Burst* into chaos with tremendous *roar*,  
And *anchor'd navies* from their stations *drive*,  
*Wild as the winds* across the howling waste  
Of mighty waters :

Here follows a very striking example of greatness, or force without sublimity. It is needless to say why. Let us but examine the sensations which these words produce in our minds the moment we read them. The principles to which criticism refers, in this case, are as obvious and incontestible as axioms of geometry. We are all moved in a similar manner by similar objects. Perhaps the sudden and unexpected exertion of extraordinary force, startles or shakes, but may not leave imagination leisure enough, to feel any sublimer emotions. Such at least are seldom co-incident to the first impression.

If some sharp rock,  
Or shoal insidious break not their career,  
And in loose fragments fling them floating round.

A circumstance not improbable from the natural

ral history of the most noble and magnanimous of animals, intitles these three lines to a place, among the many examples of sublimity to be found in the *Seasons*. The contrast between the savage indiscriminating cruelty of the *Wolf*, and the well known generosity of the *Lion*, in this instance, is not only strictly characteristical but equally interesting and sublime !

*Even beauty, force divine ! at whose bright glance  
The generous Lion stands in soften'd gaze  
Here bleeds a hapless undistinguish'd prey !*

We shall but trouble the reader with one quotation more, in which the object loses nothing of its natural sublimity from the description. It is where a thaw takes place, in some large capacious river, while vessels, barks and barges, are unhappily exposed to all the accumulated dangers and horrors of floating piles of ice, tumbling down with vast rapidity and threatening immediate destruction to whatever comes in their way.

*And hark ! the lengthening roar continuous runs  
Athwart the rifted deep : at once it bursts,  
And piles a thousand mountains to the clouds.  
Ill fares the bark with trembling wretches charg'd,  
That, toss'd amid the floating fragments moors  
Beneath the shelter of an icy isle,  
While night o'erwhelms the sea, and horror looks  
More horrible. Can human force endure*

Th'

'Th' assembled mischiefs that besiege them round?  
 Heart-gnawing hunger, fainting weariness,  
 The *roar* of *winds* and *waves*, the *crush* of *ice*,  
 Now-*ceasing*, now *renew'd* with louder *rage*,  
 And in dire echoes *bellowing* round the *main*.  
 More to embroil the deep, Leviathan  
 And his *unwieldy* train, in dreadful sport,  
 Tempest the loosen'd brine, while *thro' the gloom*,  
 Far, from the *bleak inhospitable shore*,  
 Loading the *winds*, is heard the hungry howl  
 Of famish'd monsters !

But it is not among the inanimate parts of nature only or chiefly, that our bard displays the sublimity of his genius. Many zoological descriptions in the *Seasons* are equally simple and exalted. The graceful impetuosity of the *Steed*, and rampant fury of the *Bull*, are both delineated with dignity and truth. His strictures on the *Lion*, the *Elephant*, the *Hippopotamos* and the *Eagle*, are still however touched with a bolder pencil. He seizes indeed, with inimitable dexterity and ease every thing great and majestic in nature ! And his poem contains more sublime images perhaps, in proportion to its size, than any other purely descriptive one we have.

IT is now high time, however, to examine a little that sentimental sublimity of which also he is no inferior master. Here too the chief difficulty

difficulty lies in condensing the ideas which every new view of the subject suggest, and abridging the materials that every where arrange themselves before us.

To this purpose, how concise and emphatical his account of those illustrious characters, whose useful science and active virtue adorned the earlier periods of society. Indeed there is no reading this sublime roll of heroes without emotions of emulation. Such are the powerful attractions of superior worth, and so much more congenial to the inmost affections of the heart is good than bad example! The calm majestic invincible fortitude of *Socrates* embracing the sternest fate in the mildest composure—the dispassionate and disinterested patriotism and intrepidity of *Leonidas* in sacrificing himself for the good of his country,—the modest and humble, but pure and persevering honesty of *Aristides*, in uniformly preferring justice to his own interest,—the simplicity and gentleness of the amiable and zealous *Cimon*, in patronizing every appearance of merit,—and the steady resolution of *Timoleon*, so tempered with humanity on every trying occasion, with all those ancient enthusiasts for the rights of mankind, and the dignity of real virtue, whose memorial is still dear to posterity, are admirably calculated to stimulate our innate love of excellence, to awaken all the ingenuity of our na-  
tures,

tures, and brace our hearts with new nerves.

In another passage, which as it is not so long, we shall quote : what a glorious image has he produced of *contentment*, in conjunction with all the kindred virtues of a mild and generous temper. He has certainly very few equals, in thus delineating the various energies and effects of a good heart. According to his philosophy, which is that of nature and experience, how vastly superior the private abodes of humble fortitude to all the troublous scenes of tumultuous pride and tormenting impatience? Think on this, ye bustling factious petulant and aspiring spirits, to whom, all the forms of decency and moderation are equally contemptible, who mistake the punctilios of a frivolous for the dictates of an elegant mind, affectation for dignity, and temerity for ardour ; and who consume your fortune and constitutions in grasping at phantoms, that never can be realized. What an eloquent and emphatical picture does the poet here set before you, of the infinite mortifications, disasters, and agonies that so frequently chequer such lives as yours. Who would not pity, from the bottom of their hearts, those poor giddy frantic wretches, who can read such a passage as this, with a wanton or a listless indifference, without imbibing the most settled convictions of the reality and importance of virtue to human welfare, without instantly, and for

ever renouncing every vicious prepossession, and every worthless habit, and without resolutely adhering to the positive injunctions of truth and nature, in spite of all the criminal influence and address of art. Consider the man of hidden worth and unaffected delicacy. His plan is present as well as future enjoyment. He submits to some discipline that he may avoid much inconvenience and pain. In giving way to many incumbent evils, he only prepares himself for overcoming them. That independent liberality of mind, and true propriety of acting, at once so popular and so rare, are finely exemplified in every part of his conduct. He has as much wisdom as sweetens, not so much as darkens his conversation, and his manners undebased by art, discover all the undisguised simplicity of nature. His face is not distorted with grimace, his head totters not with the giddiness of the scene he occupies, his heart flutters not with the allurements of vice that environ him. How temperate his appetites, how orderly his passions, how meek his dispositions, how placid his life! The beautiful serenity of his mind, communicates a certain air of composure to every thing around him. His house is the mansion of purity, the temple of virtue, and the asylum of the destitute. There, dwell social concord, domestic comfort, holy friendship, unbroken health, blooming beauty, youthful innocence, and  
age

age matured by experience, and rather softened than soured, with infirmity and years. The contrast is carried on with equal taste and spirit throughout the quotation, and at least as full of stings to one party as of cordials to another.

Let such as deem it *glory to destroy*,  
Rush into *blood*, the *sack of cities* seek ;  
*Unpierc'd*, exulting in the *widow's wail*,  
The *virgin's shriek*, and *infant's trembling cry*.  
Let some, far-distant from their native soil,  
Urg'd or by want, or harden'd avarice,  
Find other lands beneath another sun.  
Let *this* through cities work his eager way,  
By *legal outrage* and *establish'd guile*,  
The social sense extinct ; and *that* ferment  
Mad into tumult the *sedition's herd*,  
Or melt them down to *slavery*. Let these  
Insnare the wretched in the *toils of law*,  
*Fomenting discord*, and *perplexing right*,  
An iron-race ! and those of *fairer front*,  
But *equal inhumanity*, in courts,  
*Delusive pomp*, and *dark cabals*, delight ;  
Wreath the *deep bow*, diffuse the *lying smile*,  
And tread the weary labyrinth of state.  
While *he*, from all the stormy passions free  
That restless men involve, *bears*, and but *bears*,  
At distance *safe*, the *human tempest* roar,  
Wrapt close in *conscious peace*.

But foregoing a number of passages that exemplify the same idea, and are equally intitled to distinction,

stinction, a beautiful vein of elevated piety, which runs through the whole poem, more especially merits our attention.

All the wisest and worthiest of the species, have indulged devout affections, and recommended them to others. It is the narrow, the selfish, or licentious minded, who reprobate feelings of which, whether from constitution or habit, they seem so strangely incapable. For sentiments of this kind are deeply rooted in the best hearts, consonant to all the instincts of unperverted nature, and highly becoming our present dark dependent and probationary circumstances. In truth, every indication of paternal wisdom, and benignity in the government of the world, corresponds with admirable propriety to all our first, our purest, and sublimest desires. In this manner we joyfully recognise a benefactor, whose favour nothing but impenitence can forfeit; a friend, who kindly shares our dearest solitudes, a father, in whose bosom the wounded heart rests, and reposes all its troubles.

Whatever is great and amiable in the creatures and objects around us, naturally awakens our admiration and attracts our esteem. Magnificence expands the mind, and Beauty captivates the heart. But these qualities, however diversified, are the native expressions of power and goodness. Mind can only be affected by mind. Nor can any form or modification of matter produce either  
mental

mental or moral emotion, but as it points to an invisible Agency. So that raising our hearts to heaven is not transferring them from nature, but from the imperfect image to the all-perfect Original. For all that charms our senses, enlarges our conceptions or exalts our expectations among the complicated wonders of the universe, are but the temporary shadows of his excellence, whose being is uncreated, whose perfections are infinite, and whose nature is eternal.

A correspondence with the AUTHOR, seems therefore indispensable to the felicity and improvement of our natures. But the operations of the human intellect, are confined for the most part, to those organs of sensation which we possess in common with other animals. And how thus deeply immersed *in matter* can we reciprocate with an ESSENCE so pure and spiritual, or indeed how associate with any species of being, not endowed with the same organs that we have? Nor are those who are, furnished with capacities and desires equal to ours. On whom then, or on what, shall we prostitute our affections and hearts? Are we mere *Grubs* to delight only in digging, or *Froth-worms* to invest ourselves in a spume that yields to the touch and dissolves with the wind? And in what are the trifles to which we seem so immoderately attached, superior? Can any thing be more nugatory or abortive than the

4. pursuit

pursuit of fame? Wealth confers an imaginary  
 consequence indeed, but as certainly petrifies the  
 mind and blasts our peace. And what is inordi-  
 nate indulgence of every kind, but additional fer-  
 mentation to a feverish heart? Hear then the Phi-  
 losophy of Nature! Her dictates are those of wis-  
 dom and her voice is that of truth. "Rest not,  
 "O mortals!" says she, "in streams that only  
 "lead to the *Fountain*, in a likeness that only points  
 "out the *Original*, in effects that only discover the  
 "Cause! What is all that comes, within the cog-  
 "nizance of your senses, but an index to that  
 "divine principle that gave me birth! Does not  
 "infinite skill obviously pervade my whole frame?  
 "Are the selection, arrangement, and position of  
 "my parts, the constant regularity of my greatest  
 "and minutest movements, the laws to which I  
 "refer, and the harmony I display, no decisive  
 "characters of intelligence and design? Yes. All  
 "the various modifications of elegance, the most  
 "exquisite models of symmetry, the nicest rules  
 "of proportion, the fairest forms of excellence,  
 "and the sweetest delineations of beauty that mark  
 "my several productions, revolutions and ap-  
 "pearances, plainly suppose a contrivance equal  
 "to the execution. Behold in me, the intellec-  
 "tual system embodied in a material form, that as  
 "on a publick theatre, the Supreme Being might  
 "thus unveil his glories, and become accessible to  
 "his

“ his creatures, by a medium so well adapted to  
“ their natures.” So that what body is to *mind*,  
that the visible creation is to its *Author*, a mere *Sensorium*; to use an expression of some late philosophers, by means of which, he discovers himself to his rational offspring in all that greatness which fills them with veneration, in all that effusion of goodness that warms them with gratitude, in all those lovely assemblages of beauty, that ravish them with delight, and in all those indications of the tenderest attentions to their best interest, that dispose them to a cordial acquiescence in every appointment of Providence!

This fine idea, that does more honour to the spirit of ancient philosophy, than all her other discoveries put together, unites and completes the universal plan of things. All inferior natures are wisely furnished, with an instinctive principle that under the most distressing circumstances points out a remedy. And shall the intellectual system, animated as it is, by the DIVINITY, in the same manner, as the material is, by every species of subordinate life, be less provided against emergencies or less fruitful of resources? What then would become of the heart, in all such cases as preclude human sympathy and comfort. And how frequent is it to meet with the best in some such deplorable extremity? Many persons of the greatest worth, are often in the greatest troubles,  
with-

without being at liberty to divulge them ! Imagination, may suffer so much from corporeal debility, as to baffle all the powers of medicine and poison every source of enjoyment. And who that never felt, can possibly conceive, how insufferably exquisite the pangs of a mind thus disordered are ? Some are so deeply affected by a succession of misfortunes, so piqued at the uniform appearance of contumely from every prospect that flatters their wishes, that they have nothing for it but to suffer and be silent. A few perhaps, with all the dissipation and wantonness that invade the sacred elysium of *love*, may yet be found in some dismal solitude, fighting to the winds, wasting in melancholy or raving in despair ; the miserable victim of an abortive passion ! Others have been so often and cruelly abused in the tenderest and sublimest of all regards, have been so egregiously duped in their choice of friends, have lavished their affections on creatures at once so insignificant and assuming, so affected and contemptible, so little in truth and great in idea, so fervent in appearance and perfidious in reality, that a settled jealousy and distrust of mankind, and a thousand interesting delicacies, render it impossible that ever their sorrows should be fully known but to their own hearts. Who can describe the horrors of a sensibility thus deeply  
and

and radically wounded? What are all the diseases and deaths that assail the body to such a rooted dejection of spirit! And where is that philosophy which having excluded supreme benignity from the administration of the universe, can suggest another source of consolation, equally adequate to all the exigencies of humanity? It is under some such calamities as these perhaps, that the truth and validity of a superintending Providence is chiefly felt; because then, that all the resources of nature are unequal to the wants of an immortal mind! Thus driven from every precarious and deceitful refuge, how peculiarly soothing to every sentiment that arises from conscious timidity; that the arms of heaven are always open, and that the great Parent of Nature can never be indifferent to our well being! How resolute and magnanimous on all such occasions the tone of pious resignation and filial dependence? Figure a good mind, thus desolate and abandoned, cast out by the objects of his fondest affection, and contemptible in the eyes of the world. No perils can shake his confidence or rob him of his hopes. He says to himself, and says it with a dignity and composure superior to all affectation,—were events at the disposal or under the controul of any but the best of beings, there might be some reason to suspect the worst? But O how graceful,

graceful, how orderly, how magnificent, how lovely is nature animated with a spirit so benevolent, brightened with a presence so benignant, directed to an end so desirable! All existence rejoices under the management of a wisdom that never errs, and a bounty that never subsides. For nothing can possibly go wrong, where supreme benignity and infinite power predominate: Yet a little while, and all the perplexities of the natural and jarring contradictions of the moral world, shall be fully unravelled. The great concluding scene, big as it must be, with the fate of worlds, shall also be a complete vindication of all the ministrations of Providence! What then, though the life of man, be as much ruffled and harassed with disasters as the ocean is with storms! though sorrows brood and thicken in his mind like clouds in a troubled sky, and though his dearest hopes perish in a moment, as plants are killed by the frost and blighted by the wind? There is still ONE at the head of affairs and superior to all contingencies in whom my best interests are perfectly secure! Let the hemisphere deepen and the tempest rage!—let thunders rend the heavens and earthquakes depopulate the world!—let the elements run into confusion, the pillars of the universe tremble and nature go to wreck!—I see the presiding DIVINITY kindly over-ruling every publick

publick and private commotion—I hear his majestic voice silencing the tumult of things, and bidding the wildest uproar of mind, as well as matter, *be still*—I feel his gracious presence pervading my whole frame, hushing my discordant passions into peace, and feasting every sensation of my heart with joy !

Such are some of the sublime dictates which the genius of universal Nature inspires, and with which the Muse of Thomson is still in the happiest unison. On this glorious and propitious system he reconciles his heart to all those apparent contradictions, which, in the moral government of the world, embroil the present scene and darken that of futurity. That this is only the seed-time of immortality, that our harvest is reserved for a purer period, and that the *Seasons* figuratively as well as literally, depend on a destination which nothing can frustrate, are some of the leading convictions he would imprint on the minds of men. And he rejoices in full concert with the whole world of the *Virtuous*, that when this unaccountable and confounding jumble of things ; when all the present strange mysterious schemes of Providence are unravelled, *human happiness shall appear the necessary consequence of human worth*, as well as the ultimate determination of Heaven. Hence the following passage is not more inimitably simple and sublime

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than

than pathetic and consolatory. And often as it has been quoted from motives of taste, perchance in company to improve the conversation, or of pedantry in publick to embellish the tawdry common place of pulpit declamation, it still possesses charms enow, to affect the serious, and melt the feeling heart.

Ye good distress'd !

Ye noble few ! who here *unbending stand*

*Beneath life's pressure, yet bear up a while,*

And what your *bounded view*, which only saw

*A little part*, deem'd *Evil*, is no more :

The *storms* of WINTRY TIME will *quickly pass*,

And one *unbounded* SPRING incircle *all*.

I once intended to have illustrated more fully the piety of the *Seasons*, by a formal paraphrase of the sublime Hymn that concludes them. Never surely was human composition more sweetly stored with the sentiments of gratitude or richly adorned with the graces of poetry. Simplicity of numbers, elevation of diction, sublimity of thought and ardour of conception, are its general characteristics. To dilate would impair its beauties, and to delineate perhaps debilitate its spirit. Thomson meant it as an epitome of the whole poem. Nor can I better conclude these STRICTURES than with *A Hymn on the Seasons*,

*Seasons*, and that so directly in point, as to express the very sentiments of my heart on the subject.

*The devotional HYMN, that concludes The*  
SEASONS.

THESE as they change, ALMIGHTY FATHER, THESE  
Are but the *varied* GOD. The rolling year  
Is full of Thee. Forth in the pleasing Spring  
THY beauty walks, THY tendernefs and love.  
Wide flush the fields; the softening air is balm;  
Echo the mountains round; the forest smiles;  
And every sense, and every heart is joy.  
Then comes THY glory in the summer-months,  
With light and heat refulgent. Then THY sun  
Shoots full perfection thro' the swelling year:  
And oft THY voice in dreadful thunder speaks;  
And oft at dawn, deep noon, or falling eve,  
By brooks and groves, in hollow-whispering gales,  
THY bounty shines in Autumn unconfin'd,  
And spreads a common feast for all that lives.  
In winter awful THOU! with clouds and storms  
Around THEE thrown, tempest o'er tempest roll'd,  
Majestic darkness! on the whirlwind's wing,  
Riding sublime, THOU bid'st the world adore,  
And humblest Nature with THY northern blast.

Mysterious round! what skill, what force divine,  
Deep-felt in these appear! a simple train,  
Yet so delightful mix'd, with such kind art,

Such beauty and beneficence combin'd ;  
 Shade unperceiv'd, so softning into shade ;  
 And all so forming an harmonious whole ;  
 That, as they still succeed, they ravish still.  
 But wandering oft, with brute unconscious gaze,  
*Man marks not THEE*, marks not the *mighty hand*  
 That, ever busy, *wheels* the silent spheres ;  
*Works* in the secret deeps ; shoots, steaming, thence  
 The fair profusion that o'er spreads the Spring ;  
*Flings* from the *sun direct* the flaming day ;  
*Feeds* every creature ; *hurls* the tempest forth ;  
 And, as on earth this grateful change *revolves*,  
 With transport *touches* all the springs of life.

Nature, attend ! join every living soul,  
 Beneath the spacious temple of the sky,  
 In adoration join ; and, ardent, raise  
 One general song ! To HIM ye *vocal gales*,  
 Breath soft, whose SPIRIT in your freshness breathes :  
 Oh talk of HIM in solitary glooms !  
 Where, o'er the rock, the scarcely waving pine  
 Fills the brown shade with a religious awe.  
 And ye, whose bolder note is heard afar,  
 Who shake th' astonish'd world, lift high to heaven  
 Th' impetuous song, and say from whom you *rage*.  
 His praise ye *brooks*, attune, ye trembling *rills* ;  
 And let me catch it as I muse along.  
 Ye headlong *torrents*, rapid, and profound ;  
 Ye *softer floods*, that lead the humid maze  
 Along the vale ; and thou, *majestic main*,  
 A secret world of wonders in thyself,

Sound

Sound His stupendous praise ; whose greater voice  
Or bids you *roar*, or bids your roarings *fall*.  
Soft-roll your incense, *herbs*, and *fruits*, and *flowers*,  
In mingled clouds to HIM ; whose *sun* exalts,  
Whose *breath* perfumes you, and whose *pencil* paints.  
Ye *forests* bend, ye *harvests* wave, to HIM ;  
Breathe your still song into the reaper's heart,  
As home he goes beneath the joyous moon.

Ye that keep watch in heaven, as earth asleep  
Unconscious lies, effuse your mildest beams  
Ye *constellations*, while your angels strike,  
Amid the spangled sky, the silver lyre.  
Great *source* of day ! best image here below  
Of thy Creator, ever pouring wide,  
From world to world, the vital ocean round,  
On Nature write with every *beam* His praise.  
The *thunder* roll : be hush'd the prostrate world ;  
While cloud to cloud returns the solemn hymn.

Bleat out afresh, ye *hills* ; ye *mossy rocks*,  
Retain the sound : the broad responsive lowe,  
Ye valleys, *raise* ; for the GREAT SHEPHERD reigns ;  
And his *unsuffering* kingdom yet will come.  
Ye *woodlands* all, awake : a boundless song  
Burst from the groves, and when the restless day,  
Expiring, lays the warbling world asleep,  
Sweetest of birds ! *sweet Philomela*, charm  
The listening shades, and teach the night His praise.

Ye chief, for whom the whole creation smiles,  
 At once the *head*, the *heart*, and *tongue* of all,  
 Crown the great hymn ! in *swarming cities* vast,  
 Assembled men, to the deep organ join  
 The long-resounding voice, oft-breaking clear,  
 At solemn pauses, through the swelling base ;  
 And, as each mingled flame increases each,  
 In one united ardor rise to heaven.  
 Or if you rather chuse the rural shade,  
 And find a *fane* in every sacred grove ;  
 There let the *shepherd's flute*, the *virgin's lay*,  
 The *prompting seraph*, and the *poet's lyre*,  
 Still sing the GOD of SEASONS, as they roll.

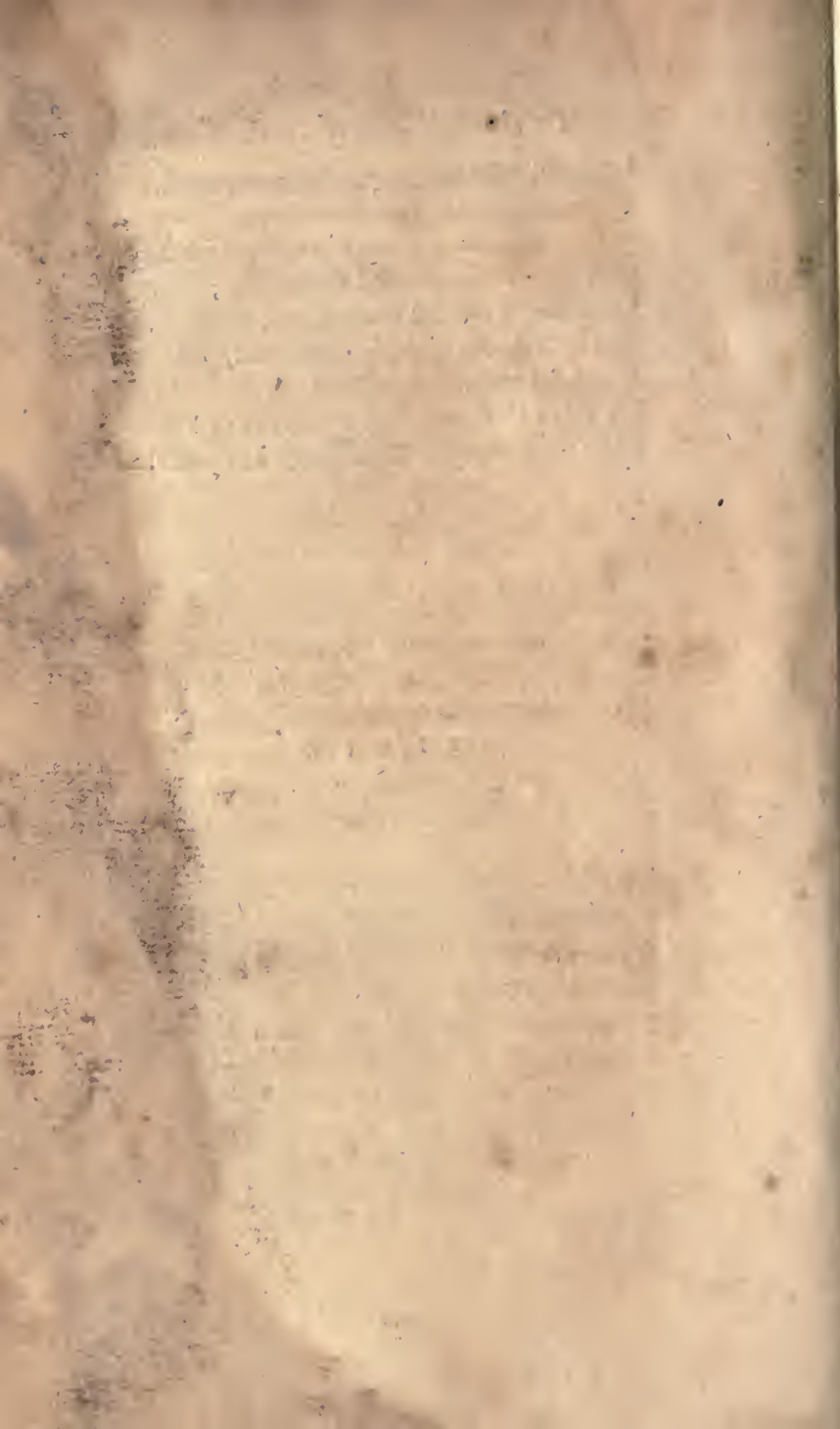
For *me*, when I forget the darling theme,  
 Whether the blossom blows, the summer-ray  
 Rustles the plain, *inspiring* Autumn gleams ;  
 Or winter rises in the blackening east ;  
 Be *my tongue* mute, may fancy *paint* no more,  
 And *dead* to joy, forget *my heart* to beat !

Should fate command me to the farthest verge  
 Of the green earth, to distant barbarous climes,  
 Rivers unknown to song ; where first the sun  
 Gilds *Indian* mountains, or his setting beam  
 Flames on th' *Atlantic* isles ; 'tis *nought* to me :  
 Since GOD is *ever* present, *ever* felt,  
 In the *void waste* as in the *city full* ;  
 And where HE *vital* breathes, there *must* be joy.  
 When even *at last* the solemn hour shall come,  
 And wing my *mystic flight* to *future worlds*,

I cheerful

I chearful *will obey*; there, with new powers,  
Will *rising wonders* sing: I cannot go  
Where UNIVERSAL LOVE not smiles around,  
Sustaining all *yon orbs* and all *their sons*;  
From *seeming evil* still educing *good*,  
And *better* thence again, and *better* still,  
In infinite progression. But I lose  
Myself in HIM, in LIGHT INEFFABLE!  
Come then, *expressive* silence, *muse* HIS praise.

F I N I S.



Rare  
Book  
Room







